

# Civil Society



## KERALA'S MIGHTY MANGO TREE

Kuttiattoor yields too much fruit



### 'WE NEED TO REVISIT FAMILY PLANNING'

Poonam Muttreja on govt health schemes for women  
Pages 6-7

### DELHI'S CIVIC MESS

Pages 8-9

### NO CRUSHING MALETHA

Pages 10-11

### TECH TOOLS FOR NGOs

Pages 22-23

### YOUR CARBON METER

Page 24

### EVALUATING SCHOOLS

Pages 27-28

### A MENU WITH MILLET

Page 33





## **Introducing Tablets for better education**

SST has started using tablets in schools to help children improve their learning levels. This has attracted many children coming to the schools.

S. Latha, a girl student studying in class 4 of Panchayat union primary school, Thirukkurungudi village, Tirunelveli district was irregular in attending school. Therefore she was not able to keep up with the rest of the students in class. After introduction of tablets, she enjoys coming to the school and uses tablet every day. She finds the school interesting. She is no longer a slow learner. She is one among the best students in the class.

**SRINIVASAN SERVICES TRUST  
(CSR Arm of TVS Motor Company)**

**TVS MOTOR COMPANY**

Post Box No. 4, Harita, Hosur, Tamil Nadu Pin: 635109  
Ph: 04344-276780 Fax: 04344-276878 URL: [www.tvsmotor.co.in](http://www.tvsmotor.co.in)

# CONTENTS



COVER STORY

## KERALA'S MIGHTY MANGO TREE

Kuttiattoor groans under the weight of its mangoes between March and May. Its trees yield three to four times more than an average mango tree. Yet growers don't make much money.

# 18

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: SHREE PADRE

J&K gives back money for water .....	11
NGOs benefit from standards .....	14
Haldikhol is now less poor .....	15
Why BJP failed to make it in Kolkata .....	16-17
Govt needs better talent .....	25-26
Self-help for the rural elderly .....	28
A child's vision .....	29-30
'In India's diversity is its unity' .....	30-31
Bangle Box and Solar Cap .....	34

Contact Civil Society at:  
response@civilsocietyonline.com  
The magazine does not undertake to respond to unsolicited contributions sent to the editor for publication.

# Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

## A rare mango that is all ours

WE find it interesting to report on the fruits and vegetables of India. Such is the range of our country's biodiversity that there are always surprises. A mango here, a jackfruit there, apples growing in Karnataka, herbal gardens for the home, villages with giant tubers — these are all refreshing and exciting stories to tell.

Our readers also respond with enthusiasm. They ask for advice and information, seek out saplings and suggest methods of cultivation. We receive innumerable recipes. We have had an order for 50 tonnes of jackfruit land on our website!

So, to our growing list of farm stories we are happy to add the fecund Kuttiattoor mango tree in Kerala. It produces much more fruit than any other mango tree and has unique characteristics. It doesn't rival the Alphonso, but it is special enough to earn geographical indicator status for the villages in which it is grown.

The message for the government is that for boosting farm incomes it pays to be innovative and look around. Communities already do many things well when it comes to growing fruits and vegetables. What they need is access to finance, markets, cold chains and processing facilities. Much is made of rural stress, falling yields and small holdings. Yet, not enough is done to help the rural economy evolve and grow. Rural areas need opportunities that match contemporary realities and the aspirations of the young.

In our interview for the month we speak to Poonam Muttreja of the Population Foundation of India on the need for governments to look more closely at programmes for women's health. The focus on targets and incentives hasn't worked. It has made the government's initiatives number-driven whereas what should be addressed are the choices and rights of women. This is particularly so with regard to poor women whose search for contraception leads them to sterilisation camps where medical standards are appalling. Governments need to get their act together otherwise tragedies of the kind witnessed in Bilaspur will be repeated. Even when tragedies do not take place, the quality of care is so poor that a woman undergoing a procedure experiences a host of other medical problems. Civil society groups are also to blame for this state of affairs because of their unwillingness to get involved with family planning. The opposition to injectable contraceptives is a case in point. Fresh thinking and better understanding of what women want is called for.

Cities that have done well the world over have had strong leaders who have worked their way through difficult problems by building trust and creating hope. This issue has a story on how the popular INA Market and its surroundings have fallen off Delhi's civic map when the municipal corporation was split into three by the Sheila Dikshit government. There was just no application of mind.

**Publisher**  
Umesh Anand

**Editor**  
Rita Anand

**News Network**  
Shree Padre  
Jehangir Rashid  
Rakesh Agrawal  
Susheela Nair

**Photography**  
Ajit Krishna

**Layout & Design**  
Virender Chauhan

**Cartoonist**  
Samita Rathor

**Write to Civil Society at:**  
A-16 (West Side), 3rd Floor,  
South Extension Part 2,  
New Delhi -110049.  
Ph: 011-46033825,  
9811787772

Printed and published by  
Umesh Anand on behalf of

Rita Anand, owner of the title, from  
A-53 D, First Floor, Panchsheel Vihar,  
Malviya Nagar, New Delhi -110017.  
Printed at Samrat Offset Pvt. Ltd.,  
B-88, Okhla Phase II, New Delhi - 110020.

**Postal Registration No.**  
DL(S)-01/3255/2015-17.  
Registered to post without pre-payment  
U(SE)-10/2015-17 at New Delhi PSO  
Registered with the Registrar of  
Newspapers of India under  
RNI No.: DELENG/2003/11607  
Total no of pages: 36  
www.civilsocietyonline.com

### Advisory Board

ANUPAM MISHRA  
ARUNA ROY  
NASSER MUNJEE  
ARUN MAIRA  
DARSHAN SHANKAR  
HARIVANSH  
JUG SURAIYA  
UPENDRA KAUL  
VIR CHOPRA

### Get your copy of Civil Society from

**Delhi:** Bahri Sons, Central  
News Agency, stalls at Green  
Park market, South Extn Part  
II, Aurobindo Market, R. K.  
Puram, Vasant Vihar, Vasant  
Kunj, J.N.U., S.D.A. Market,  
Saket, Kalkajee, C. R. Park,  
New Friends Colony, Lajpat  
Nagar, Defence Colony, Hauz  
Khas, Moti Bagh, Sector 62  
Noida.

**Gurgaon:** DLF Phase 1

Market, Galleria Market,  
Qutab Plaza, Sector 14  
Market, Sector 17 Market,  
Sector 54, Sector 44.

**Kolkata:** Oxford Bookstore,  
Classic Books.

**Bengaluru:** Variety on  
St Mark's Road.

**Lucknow:** Ram Advani  
Bookseller at Hazratganj.

**Chandigarh:** The Browser.



# India's No.1 Power Products Company

## Portable Generators for all your power needs.

### Ultra Silent Series



**EU65is**  
Output : 5500 VA



**EU30is**  
Output : 2800 VA

### Super Silent Series



**EXK 2800s**  
Output : 2100 VA

### Handy Series



**EP 1000**  
Output - 750 VA

## Whatever your power application Honda engines will deliver!



**GX120 (3.5 HP)**



**GX160 (4.8 HP)**

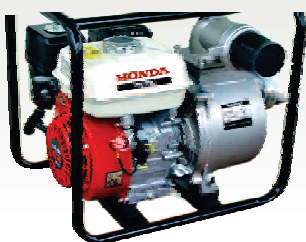


**GX390 (11.7 HP)**



**GX690 (22.1HP)**

## Portable Water Pump get water wherever ... whenever!



**WB 30X (5.5 HP)**

## Power Tiller For the 😊 happy fields !



**Tiller FJ500**

## Gardening Equipment For that perfect trim !

### Brush Cutter



**UMK 435T UEDT**

### Lawnmower



Self  
propelled

**HRJ216K2**

## IN THE LIGHT

SAMITA RATHOR



many deaths. Children, who are dearest to us, are the worst affected. Apart from people, many bird species and other life forms face a survival crisis.

To find practical solutions, comprehensive planning is needed. Effective steps to reduce air pollution should also be linked to other desirable objectives such as avoiding any sudden large-scale loss of livelihood, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving road safety and public transport, ensuring electricity supply and improving green cover. Such a comprehensive plan should include alternatives for those adversely affected by pollution reduction steps.

**Bharat Dogra**

### Waterman

Congratulations to Rajendra Singh for winning the prestigious Stockholm water award.

We do hope his organisation, the Tarun Bharat Sangh, will work with the government on the Clean Ganga Mission and to improve irrigation for small farmers.

Rajendra Singh has so much rich experience in inspiring villagers, reviving rivers and making our farmers water-secure. The government must somehow persuade him to rejoin the National Ganga River Basin Authority and start a movement for local irrigation.

**Ashish Khaitan**

Rajendra Singh knows India's water woes very well. He is an encyclopedia on water.

All this has been possible because he has been well supported. His efforts have received a lot of attention. But, what we need is implementation.

**Tina Singh**

Letters should be sent to [response@civilsocietyonline.com](mailto:response@civilsocietyonline.com)

## LETTERS



nurture medicinal plants and process these into products. Some of our best and purest foods are being made by women's self-help groups and cooperatives at the grassroots. Some of these products like natural honey, jams, jellies, spices, face creams and other cosmetics are superior to imported products and much cheaper.

**Shalini Seth**

Congratulations on a brilliant May issue. I read it from end to end and found all the stories and columns to be interesting and useful. The cover story on Ayurveda is timely.

**Shiban Bakshi**

spoken with courage and candour. I think the criminal justice system needs to be thoroughly reformed. We need honest judges at the top and at district level. We need to regulate our lawyers. And we desperately need police reforms.

**Asha Nathan**

District courts are in a complete mess. I saw the one in Gurgaon, some years ago. Lawyers were sitting near a dirty *nullah* under a temporary roof. They had pooled money to buy stationery for the judge because the government had not sanctioned funds.

**Ritu**

### City air

Air pollution has reached very critical levels in many Indian cities, leading to widespread health problems and

### Legal system

Thanks for the interview with Justice Leila Seth. True to herself, she has

### Ayurveda

Your cover story, 'Ayurveda's time is now,' is an extremely important analysis. Ayurveda has the potential to sweep the world just like yoga. It is a wondrously natural way of healing, secular and gentle. The government has, for too long, not placed Ayurveda on the pedestal it deserves. The suggestions made by the author really need to be implemented. Otherwise you might find Ayurveda blooming in the West and languishing in the land of its birth.

**Shakti Prasad**

NGOs working in health at the grassroots have for long suggested that an integrative approach to health be introduced at primary health level. For this, as the author recommends, folk healers can be validated. I also appreciate Darshan Shankar's suggestion that an Amul should be set up to

# Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

1 year ₹ 600

2 years ₹ 950

3 years ₹ 1,300

Cheque to: **CONTENT SERVICES AND PUBLISHING PVT. LTD.**

Mail to: The Publisher, Civil Society, A 16, (West Side), 3rd Floor, South Extension - 2, New Delhi - 110049.

Phone: 011-46033825, 9811787772 E-mail to: [response@civilsocietyonline.com](mailto:response@civilsocietyonline.com)

Visit us at [www.civilsocietyonline.com](http://www.civilsocietyonline.com)

## SUBSCRIBE NOW!

BECAUSE EVERYONE IS SOMEONE

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

State:.....Pincode: .....

Phone: .....Mobile: .....

E-mail: .....



# ‘WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING AGAIN’

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

IN India, the term ‘family planning’ makes governments uncomfortable. It is associated with Indira Gandhi’s infamous Emergency when forced sterilisations and vasectomies were carried out to bring down India’s burgeoning population.

But that isn’t the only reason. Feminists, NGOs and public health academics oppose the government’s family health programme. Their view is that it is inhuman and merely aimed at curbing the fertility of poor, rural women. The introduction of Depo Provera, an injectable contraceptive, in the family planning programme was so vehemently opposed that it had to be dropped.

The opponents of family planning argue that if women were provided health services, education and livelihood, they would opt for smaller families anyway.

India’s family planning programme today limps along. Just three NGOs, a few international agencies and some NGOs engaged in social marketing

promote contraception. As a result, in India’s poorest states, rural women, some as young as 25, continue to opt for sterilisation, the only method they know that is still promoted by the government in its ramshackle district hospitals and camps.

In November 2014, 16 young women died after undergoing sterilisation in an unhygienic medical camp in Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh. This shocking tragedy made international headlines.

Is it time for India to take a fresh look at its family planning programme and merge it with its ongoing schemes for women’s health? It could give poorer women a choice of contraception and thereby curb death and morbidity due to intrusive birth control methods like sterilisation or abortion.

Poonam Muttreja, director of Population Foundation of India (PFI), spoke to *Civil Society* on some of these issues in a candid interview.

**The previous UPA government unveiled many policies and schemes to improve the health indices of women and children at the grassroots. How effective have these been in the poorest states in India?**

The new schemes have been rolled out but we haven’t really increased our investment in health in the last decade. The government spends only 1.04 per cent of GDP on health. The previous UPA government did promise to increase health expenditure to 3 per cent of GDP. But that didn’t happen despite

economic growth during UPA 1. So, the schemes rely on the same budget.

Maternal and child mortality rates have decreased but at the cost of neglecting non-communicable diseases (NCD) and other communicable diseases. We have focused in a vertical manner on maternal and child health programmes.

A lot of money has been invested in the Janani Surakhsha Yojana (JSY) but if you look at data the better-off have benefitted. The poorest quintiles still have higher mortality rates than the average rate.

Secondly, under JSY, ₹1,400 is given for institutional deliveries. If we had invested that same money in improving quality of care, things would have been different. Our health infrastructure hasn’t improved.

Yes, women are going to Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and even district hospitals if there are complications. That is good. But if the quality of services provided was made much better, and the women mobilised by Ashas and ANMs, the women would have gone anyway.

The second crisis is of human resources. We have a huge shortage in the health system. The density of doctors is just six for a population of 10,000. We have around 19 health workers for a population of 10,000.

So women are getting some services and they are not dying. But, given the poor quality of care, they get infections and experience morbidity — an area we have ignored since we only look at mortality rates.

In terms of pre-natal and post-natal check-ups, it is the better-off who are accessing those services, not the poorest. We haven’t reached the last mile.

The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) has also created an infrastructure where it is easier to mismanage funds.

**Is there a crisis brewing in both policy and schemes for maternal and child health?**

We don’t make policies. We make schemes. We are a very scheming society. We don’t evaluate our programmes or even assess our budgets. When we investigated sterilisation deaths in Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh, we analysed the state’s expenditure on family planning. And we found that 85 per cent of its money was spent on incentives.

Women who come for sterilisation are given incentives. So are the women who mobilise them to come, just as in the case of JSY. Only 5-13 per cent was spent on equipment and other things. India spends just one-and-a-half per cent of its budget on spacing methods — this in a country where 70 per cent of your population is in the reproductive age group.

## INTERVIEW

Poonam Muttreja



Poonam Muttreja: ‘Family planning is India’s oldest programme’

**You would recommend we move away from giving incentives?**

Absolutely. Instead, we must use the money to improve the quality of care. We have limited resources. Some compensation can be given.

The most wonderful thing that has happened in the last 10 years is the ambulance services that have come up in rural areas. In fact, this is the kind of service that has improved institutional deliveries. It is a great model that has been scaled up. People are getting the ambulance service even in some remote areas. The ambulances have reasonably good equipment and staff who are trained to stabilise people if they are very ill. This is one of the NRHM’s achievements.

Secondly, they have found a low-cost way of getting women to take charge. The Ashas are pretty much the foundation of the NRHM. They are doing a great job.

It is a very empowering experience for women to come out of the house and be respected in society as health workers. But these jobs give them responsibility but no wages. They get incentives. When they finally ask for wages, the government won’t know what to do. But the Asha is a model that has worked.

**But why doesn’t government improve rural health infrastructure? Everyone has been asking for this.**

Look at the budgets. The quality of health provided

AJIT KRISHNA



*yet it has never been evaluated'*

is a big issue but the government does not even want to deal with it. Any service that is only for the poor is very poor in India. People who are better-off use private healthcare. We are an uncaring society. If you are working in filthy conditions, what motivation and incentives will you have? We have not evaluated our health infrastructure or quality of services. Also, since it's free we just accept it. There is no role of the community in holding the government accountable.

**Is it not possible for the community to evaluate?**  
The NRHM rolled out a 'community action for health' plan. Its secretariat is in PFI. The problem is that hardly any money has been set aside for implementation. There is very little commitment though the bureaucrat we deal with is committed.

Government programmes don't want to be evaluated. We had to explain things to state governments. We coined a slogan that community involvement is "bringing public back into public health". Every six months, they try to block the programme at state level. Fiscal devolution has not taken place. The panchayats are not interested in health but in areas where there is money. Grassroots institutions have not held the government accountable for anything, be it education, health, sanitation or roads.

We also have very few training institutes in the north. The south has many more so you have access

to greater human resources. We hardly have any teaching hospitals in the north. Public health infrastructure is in the ICU.

I would say that there is huge pressure and manipulation by the private sector to ensure the public health system collapses so that they can make money out of the poor also. We are going the American way. Health insurance is for catastrophic illnesses and hospitalisation, not for everyday care. At least, let's regulate the private health sector.

**Is the indifference due to the low status of women in the poorest districts?**

Definitely. The public health system caters primarily to women's maternal health needs and, to some extent, family planning. Men have neither of those two issues. Childbirth affects a woman's health very adversely.

Families want fewer children so the unwanted child percentage is very high. The only choice that

**'Sterilisation should never be a risky exercise. Yet, women are dying in sterilisation. Many of them get all kinds of reproductive-related illnesses.'**

women have is sterilisation which they go through after they have had the number of children they want to have. Sterilisation should never be a risky exercise. Yet, women are dying in sterilisation. Many of them get all kinds of reproductive-related illnesses after that. But we have a very small share of temporary methods, so this is the only choice that women have. For 75 per cent of women, their first experience of family planning is sterilisation.

**Is family planning still an awkward word in India? Have we not got over the Emergency?**  
Unfortunately, yes. Politically, it is seen as risky. There is no policy, no programme for family planning. It is the same target-driven programme. Just its name has been changed to Expected Level of Achievement.

Family planning is a 65-year-old programme, the oldest in India. It's never been evaluated. Everyone blames our huge population for lack of services. There are too many people, they say. Well, what are you doing about it then?

If fertility is declining because women have exercised agency or accessed family planning services or have taken the risk of going through sterilisation, it just shows how desperate families are to check their fertility.

They go to risky places and line up. Sometimes, over 80 women are sterilised in a day. There is a huge demand for family planning services. But the government does not give it the attention it deserves. In Delhi, for the entire country you have one joint secretary looking after five different programmes and family planning is one of them.

**But doesn't this issue need to be resolved in the NGO sector, by feminists and academics?**

Very few NGOs work on family planning. A large majority, including feminists — my community — have spent no time caring or wondering about

women's needs. They have gone into campaign mode against use of injectables. And that's all they do. If you have the luxury of choice, then why don't you allow women in the community to have that luxury too?

Secondly, every contraceptive has side effects. In India, 10 million abortions take place every year and 90 per cent are a proxy for contraception. About 13 per cent of women who opt for abortion, die. Sadly, the possible side effects of sterilisation in India, includes death.

And they are opposed to one injectable. I am not saying injectables will solve all your problems. But at least women who want it, will get it. You know, there are women living near the Bihar border who cross illegally into Nepal to get injectables.

In India, 36 per cent of our family planning method is sterilisation. Look at our neighbours. In Bangladesh, 17 per cent use injectables and 13-14 per cent opt for sterilisation. Then we don't have

infrastructure so we set up these dirty medical camps for people.

**Why don't they ban these camps and instead just advise women on contraception?**

We are saying that. We are saying that the government should have weekly, fixed-day services for family planning where women are counselled. But then there are no counsellors. Women in the public health system say we know what the women want. They don't know. You see, sterilisation is seen as a permanent method so that these poor women won't breed anymore.

**Do we need to start a dialogue on family planning?**

We do. We really need to. We need to approach family planning with a women's empowerment approach, as a reproductive and sexual rights realisation issue. Instead, the reaction is: oh, we are controlling their fertility. This is the other problem feminists have.

Why should we control their fertility? An earlier National Family Health Survey (NFHS) showed that people across class, caste and education want 2.1 children. This year's NFHS-3 shows people want 1.9 children. People want smaller families.

If you meet the unmet need for family planning, one-third of maternal mortality will go down. You will have fewer children but you will have children who will survive. An unwanted baby has a 50 per cent chance of not surviving.

**In which state has family planning worked?**

In Kerala, there is greater access to family planning services. Fertility rates are minus. But they access these services in the private sector. Women have greater agency and are empowered to go and take contraception because they are educated. That makes a difference. But poor, illiterate rural women don't have agency or access. Prevention is not part of our health system. ■



# INA Market falls off the civic

## Civil Society News

New Delhi

THREE years after the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was split into three municipalities, the INA Market and its neighbours, a Super Bazaar and the Mohan Singh Car Market, along with a narrow road and several pathways, have fallen off the civic map of the capital.

The shop owners pay their taxes, but upkeep does not take place because it is unclear now which municipal body is responsible for providing services.

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) says it is not under its jurisdiction. And New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), which looks after civic issues in central Delhi, says its responsibilities end at the INA Market car park.

Says NDMC's Superintendent Engineer, T.R. Meena: "The NDMC is more than 100 years old. The maps available with us don't mention this area. It is probably under the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) or the SDMC. But it's not under our jurisdiction."

The shop owners pay taxes to the SDMC just as they used to pay taxes to the unified MCD earlier.

With no one in charge, the area is filthy. Mohan Singh Market is flooded with dirty water from an overflowing drain. Sitting in his shop, Surinder Taneja, a dealer in car parts and accessories, points out that dirty sewage water flows near his shop. Garbage from the Super Bazaar is strewn all over.

The drains are blocked. After sunset, the markets are pitch dark since there are no streetlights. The orphaned road, adjacent to Pandit Bhagwan Sahay Marg, is around 200 metres and covered with potholes. Ironically, it leads right up to the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).

Waste from the vegetable and fish and meat stalls in INA Market used to be dumped nearby till the High Court recently ordered that the garbage be cleared.

It was Taneja and another motor parts trader, Shiv Kumar, who went to the High Court on behalf of the Mohan Singh Market Welfare Association of which they are office-bearers.

Apart from the filth, the traders were unhappy over access to the market being blocked because of work on extension of the Delhi Metro.

A petition was also filed in the NHRC by Radhakanta Tripathy, an advocate and human rights activist, pointing out that the INA Market is in an unhygienic condition, littered with auto repair discards, construction material and large pits on pathways that were causing injuries to children, women and pedestrians in general going to the market. The complainant pleaded for the INA area to be made clean and safe.

The NHRC took note but finally ruled that it could not adjudicate in the matter.

"We pay taxes regularly to the SDMC," says a fuming Taneja. "Look at these receipts. Have we faltered? We have paid our dues right till 2014 although neither of the municipalities looked after the sanitation and hygiene of this place. Yet we con-



The INA Market in South Delhi



Shiv Kumar and Surinder Taneja in the Mohan Singh Market

**The South Delhi Municipal Corporation says the market is not under its jurisdiction. And the New Delhi Municipal Council says its responsibilities end at the INA Market car park.**

tinue to pay. What more do they expect from us? This market came up in 1968. But till date we don't have a road that goes through our market so there is no entry and exit point. For a car market, that is essential."

"The NDMC allots the car parking contracts of Aurobindo Marg, a road in front of the INA Market, while the SDMC collects taxes from us. But when it

comes to delivery of services, both wash their hands of us," says a despondent Kumar.

"We pay taxes to the SDMC but we come under the Land and Development Office," claims Darshan Lal, owner of Kwaliti Chicken Shop. He says the area between the market and the pavement is a sort of no-man's land. After that comes the parking lot. That is claimed by the NDMC which collects lucrative parking charges.

Delhi is crowded with government agencies carrying out different tasks. The trifurcation of the MCD has worsened the problem. There is the SDMC, the NDMC, the East Delhi Municipal Corporation, the Delhi Cantonment Board, the CPWD and the DDA. Each agency has its own jurisdiction and civic issues to look after.

"These problems arise when division of any authority takes place," says Pankaj Agarwal, General Secretary, Delhi Resident Welfare Associations' Joint Front. "The trifurcation of

the MCD was done in a hurry. We did point out that it would be a problem to divide jurisdiction of drainage, roads, and so on. But the Delhi government went ahead with its plans."

He says the drain from Safdarjang Enclave, a residential colony in south Delhi, meets the main drain on its way out. One drain is under the SDMC and the other under the Public Works Department



# map in Delhi

PICTURES BY AJIT KRISHNA



The orphaned road

(PWD). “The multiplicity of authorities thus compounds the problem. We need a coordinating mechanism or authority that looks after such issues,” says Agarwal.

But Sanjay Kaul, founder of People’s Action and a BJP spokesperson, feels creating one more authority isn’t such a good idea.

“There are already so many authorities,” he points out. “They divided the MCD into three and now they are looking for a coordinating authority that presides over all three. What was the need to divide the MCD, in the first place? This isn’t a long-term solution. At best, it can work only on an ad hoc basis.”

The financial health of the three municipalities is also skewed. The SDMC has emerged as the richest: its revenues come from efficient collection of property tax, parking charges, hoarding ads, and rent from buildings.

The East Delhi Municipal Corporation has become the poorest. Its tax collection is inefficient. Out of 500,000-600,000 properties under its jurisdiction, only 200,000 pay taxes. East Delhi also has around 30 unauthorised colonies.

The North Delhi Municipal Corporation has been facing a funds crunch from the start.

But it’s not as if residents of south Delhi are enjoying better services since their municipality is the richest. In Vasant Vihar, a well-off colony in south Delhi, Vivek Tandon, Joint Secretary, Vasant Vihar Welfare Association, says things are the same.

“If we require 300 streetlights, they send only 100, that is, around 30 per cent of our request. Whether it is internal road repairs or water-logging during the monsoons, nothing has changed. They have not as yet renewed the contract with the agency that collects garbage from our colony.”

Tandon says things were better when the MCD was around. More money and more manpower were available. “It is better if they merge the three

corporations,” he feels.

Another issue plaguing the functioning of the municipalities is the tenure of the mayor. Each municipality has a mayor whose tenure is just one year.

So, in five years, each municipality will have five mayors. Altogether, the three will have 15 mayors. When this reporter approached the Mayor of East Delhi Municipal Corporation, Meenakshi of the BJP, to talk about the financial crisis facing the municipality, she agreed readily to an interview the next day. But the next day, the corporation had a new mayor — Harshdeep Malhotra of the BJP had just got elected. She refused to speak on the subject since she had just taken charge.

“It takes a mayor six to nine months to understand his/her duties and work. But by then the tenure ends, leaving no time to take up any development work in his/her area,” says Kaul.

“There is no logic behind the trifurcation,” adds Kaul. “Why three corporations? Why not seven? Delhi has seven Lok Sabha segments. It makes more sense to divide it into seven. Then local MPs, MLAs and councillors can be held accountable.”

Finances should be pooled but even that has not happened. Kaul suggests that Delhi should have one mayor with greater powers. “Delhi is a city, not a state, and its problems are like any other city’s. The NDMC and Delhi Cantonment Board are like islands. A city like Delhi cannot operate in islands. All well-managed cities in the world have greater mayoral structures. And it has worked in Hong Kong, New York and London so there is no reason why it cannot be replicated in Delhi. There is a need to build a consensus among political parties to merge all the corporations in Delhi. A greater mayoral structure and powers for Delhi is the only solution to clean up this mess,” he says. ■

Reported by Sanjay Singh

## MKSS is 25 years old

Bharat Dogra

Bhim

THE Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan’s (MKSS) May Day festivities are always a red-letter day. A *mela* is held with stalls on one side selling food, crafts and clothes. But, on the other hand, it’s also a day when comrades renew their solidarity, plan, and spell out their priorities for the coming year.

This year’s May Day celebration, held in Bhim town in Rajsamand district, was special. The MKSS turned 25. Members of the MKSS along with friends and well-wishers were even more keen to attend this milestone event. There was much to cheer. The MKSS is today well-known across India. It has been at the forefront of significant national legislation such as the RTI and NREGA and its social audits have become a model.

Aruna Roy recalled the time when she along with Nikhil Dey and Shankar had come to work in this area, around 1987. They immediately plunged into struggles, fighting against a big feudal landlord in Sohargarh followed by a struggle for minimum wages. In 1990 they gathered at Bhim and decided to form the MKSS.

Aruna Roy outlined some priorities of the MKSS. She said the MKSS would form unions of NREGA workers. Previous efforts to unionise them had been thwarted since the authorities refused to register the unions. But she said the MKSS would go ahead anyway since organising the workers would also strengthen the NREGA law.

Nikhil Dey said poor implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) was a major concern. The MKSS would be joining hands with activists across Rajasthan and the newspaper, *Rajasthan Patrika*, to find out how many schools have essential facilities and are imparting quality education.

Shankar emphasised the near collapse of NREGA. He said people were not getting employment and those who had put in work were not getting fair wages. There was also delay in payment of dues. The MKSS also voiced concern over changes in the Land Acquisition Act.

Anecdotes and songs enlivened a brief presentation of the 25 years of work of the MKSS. Kavita Srivastava of PUCL condemned the onslaught on labour rights. Ginnie Srivastava emphasised the growing concerns of single women. Moti, coordinator of Sankalp, recalled that the struggles of Sahariya tribals were helped greatly by the solidarity shown by the MKSS particularly when bonded workers were released and required rehabilitation.

Resolutions were also passed. The MKSS said that pension of not less than ₹2,000 should be universalized and rations should be accessible to all without APL/BPL distinctions. Ensuring the rights of Dalits and nomadic groups, changing the timing of NREGA work in summer, permitting rural women to contest panchayat elections without imposing academic qualifications were included in the resolutions that were passed. ■



# MALETHA REFUSES TO BE CRUSHED

**Rakesh Agrawal**  
Dehradun

**M**ALETHA village in Tehri Garhwal is very angry. Men, women and children sit on the road in *dharna*, demanding that a stone crushing company grandly called Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram be evicted from their village.

The villagers' problems began in February 2014 when two stone crushers arrived in Maletha with their machines. Their operations created an ear-splitting noise and belched clouds of dust that settled on crops and orchards.

In August, another three machines turned up. The unbearable din and dust threatened the pride and joy of the village — its vast *searas* or paddy fields created in the early 17th century by Madho Singh Bhandari, who was gifted the village by the king of Garhwal as a reward for his bravery and intelligence.

In those days, Maletha relied on rain-fed agriculture so all the villagers could grow were hardy millets. But the redoubtable Bhandari, with great determination and hard work, built a two-km canal from the Chandrabhaga river, a tributary of the Alaknanda, to his village. Built of hard rock, the canal had to cut through a hill. The villagers now had enough water to grow paddy, including the aromatic *basmati* rice, and raise orchards.

Maletha has a memorial in Bhandari's honour. "But now a few greedy people want to destroy our legacy and our *jal, jangal, jameen*," says a distraught Vimala Devi, 44. The villagers began their protests in August 2014 by holding hunger strikes, staging *dharnas*, singing songs, shouting slogans and organising demonstrations against the stone crushing companies.

The initial protest lasted 42 days. Eventually, Yugal Kishore Pant, district magistrate of Tehri, ordered the stone crushers to stop operations. But the stone crushers approached the Uttarakhand High Court which dismissed the district magistrate's orders. The court ruled that the district magistrate did not have the authority to throw out the stone crushers since the state government had given them permission to operate.

The village rose in revolt. It became a war zone. "More than 150 armed policemen turned up here as if we were terrorists, but we continued our angry but peaceful protest," recalls Rukmani Devi, 58.

The administration decided to crack down. Summons were issued

against 15 people who had gathered at a central spot in the village to protest. Women and the youth held a rally against the stone crushing companies. They took an oath to oppose them, no matter what. The administration reacted and imposed a ban on gatherings in the village.

Eventually, the Uttarakhand government relented and cancelled the licences of four stone crushing companies. But the fifth — Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram — continues to pound away, emitting dust and noise on a hilltop 200 metres above the village.

The villagers say they will end their agitation only when the government cancels the licence of the company, which belongs to Vikram Singh Negi, the Congress MLA from Pratapnagar constituency.

"We will do whatever it takes. Our *basmati* is very popular. We also grow all kinds of pulses and wheat. We will not let anything come in our way," says Soorbir Singh Bisht, the village pradhan. "If agriculture is ruined it will lead to migration not just from Maletha but from nine villages in three gram sabhas," points out Dev Singh Negi, 55, a farmer.

"The dust will fall on growing plants, blocking their stomata, reducing photosynthesis and finally causing their death," warns Anil Gautam of People's Science Institute, an NGO in Dehradun supporting the agitation.

On 17 May, Maletha organised a rally. Six neighbouring villages marched with the villagers to the SDM's office in Kirtinagar and handed over a memo



Maletha's historic paddy fields and fertile farms

demanding closure of the stone crushing company.

The posse of policemen posted at the site is sympathetic. "We are on duty so we cannot take sides but their demands are justified," confessed one policeman.

"The stone crushers got environmental and pollution clearance in no time as they belong to resourceful people. The irregularities in these clearances must be inspected," says Sita Devi, head of the Mahila Mangal Dal in Maletha. She went on an 11-day hunger strike in January this year against the stone crushers. The district authorities intervened and shifted her to hospital.

Sameer Raturi, 32, a member of Himalaya Bachao Abhiyan, took over the hunger strike.

"Stone crushing will lead to landslides and ruin the village's water resources," says Raturi.

The villagers are clear that they want to carry on farming. Nobody is interested in jobs.

"Development must be from locally available resources by local people and for local people," says Raturi. Small industries manufacturing jams and jellies, and marketing local fruit with medicinal value would have appeal here. Maletha is a large village with 550 households and is almost self-sufficient.

Well-known activists are supporting the agitation. Medha Patkar has written to the chief minister about the issue. Swami Shivanand of Matri Sadan who has gone on a fast unto death against illegal sand mining on the Ganga river bed in Haridwar is also supporting Maletha.

Environmentalists Sunder Lal Bahuguna and Anil Joshi, founder of the Himalayan Environmental



The stone crushers belch out dust that settles on crops and orchards



## CONFLICT ZONE

# J&K gives back money for water

Harun Ali Khan  
Jammu

THE Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) government is facing criticism for keeping millions of people in its rural areas deprived of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities despite receiving huge financial assistance from the Central government.

The National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) is aimed at providing potable water to people in rural areas. But the J&K government, despite having enough funds, chose to return the money unutilised, rather than achieve its target. Instead of providing safe drinking water to 804 habitations during the 2014-15 financial year, it could cover only 379 habitations under NRDWP.

According to a report published in a leading newspaper, in the last financial year, the state's unspent balance crossed the records of previous years with the authorities failing to utilise ₹310.15 crore. The figure was ₹141.95 crore in 2012-13 and ₹59.11 crore in 2013-14.

The habitations left out are hugely impacted by the unavailability of safe drinking water. In the border village of Nar Balnoi, located near the Krishna Ghati sector in Mendhar tehsil of Poonch district, the locals have spent their entire lives fighting two things — cross-border firing and unavailability of safe drinking water.

"It requires three hours to fetch water from the nearby *chashma* (natural spring). We have to make several rounds, walking four to eight km with heavy buckets of water on our heads. It is not only time-consuming but affects our lives in a major way," rues Naseem Akhter.

She explains how the drill is affecting the education of children in Nar Balnoi: "It is impossible to walk for three or more hours and return home to send children to school on time, especially when they accompany us to fetch water. They usually reach school late (there is no transport), thus missing a lot in the syllabus."

Mukhtar Ahmad, in his early twenties, had to opt for a correspondence course after completing his schooling as he couldn't leave his mother alone to handle the task of fetching water. "Water is the reason for most of our worries. I couldn't opt for a regular course for my higher studies away from my house as there is no one in my family fit enough to take on the responsibility of fetching water," said a disappointed Ahmad who had dreamed of a different life if only the government had provided drinking water.

The arduous process of fetching water has also taken a toll of the health of the women in such remote villages. "Our vessels fall off our heads, we ourselves fall several times, and many of us have suffered a miscarriage at least once. But that doesn't change our daily routine," rues Naeda Akhter, 28, a resident of Ari village, adding that even after childbirth, they rest for barely 15 days before resuming their grinding chores.

Coming from a state ranked among the top seven in terms of time spent by household members for fetching water from outside the premises, these women walk an average of four km in winter and eight km in summer, carrying large quantities of water. The impact of this on their physical and reproductive health is palpable.

According to a report published by the World Health Organisation on 'Gender, Climate Change

CHARKHA



Women are walking miles to fetch water



The Bhandari Memorial

Studies and Conservation Organisation, and Vijay Jardhari of the Beej Bachao Andolan are backing the agitation by villagers.

Maletha is also readying for a second fight — against a railway line from Rishikesh to Karnprayag, about 80 km away, that will cut through their fertile fields.

"We are not anti-development. We really want our village to be connected with the train. But why can't they build a bridge over our fields, so that the train can run and our fields can also continue to produce food?" asks Vimala.

There is talk of a tunnel being built. It will emerge just next to the village's Bhandari memorial. The villagers say explosives will be used, a lot of debris will fly around, and Maletha's cultural heritage will be blown to bits.

"They should build tunnels using modern technology that needs no explosives like they did while tunnelling for the Delhi Metro," says Raturi, who also works with a mobile infrastructure firm in Noida.

The villagers are gearing up to take their battle to the High Court. Even if the court doesn't rule in their favour, they will not give up. Once again, it will be a people versus government battle. ■

and Health,' at least 30 per cent of a woman's daily energy is spent on fetching water during the dry season in rural India.

"I have been fetching water for the last 25 years. Today, I suffer from extreme aches in my head, neck, back and knees," says Hamida Bi, 49. "Initially, I had a problem only in my back but now my entire body has given up. From a monthly expense of ₹200 on medicines, I am now spending over ₹1,000, with little improvement to show for it." She has no regular income so she finds it difficult to pay for her treatment.

Listening to their misery, one wonders why the state government hasn't done anything for these people who deserve at least basic development. Since there is no dearth of money, lack of intention is clearly the reason. "We are the first to face bullets and shells along with the security forces but the unavailability of water has given us more pain," says Mohammad Azim, as he trudges off with two empty vessels towards the *chashma*. ■

(Charkha Features)



# SOS for Nepal's children

ZISHAAN AKBAR LATIF

**Kavita Charanji**  
New Delhi

**V**OLUNTARY organisations are worried over the prospect of child trafficking in earthquake-hit Nepal. Large numbers of children have been left to fend for themselves after one or both parents were found dead under the rubble of what they once called home. Even if their families are alive, these children are scarred by the tragedy.

SOS Children's Villages Nepal has been an active if quiet presence in caring for the many vulnerable children who need all the support they can get. The NGO aims to reunite lost children with their families and bring orphaned children to one of their villages in Nepal.

An SOS report quotes the heartrending case of two-and-a-half years old Sujal from Sindhupal Chowk, one of the most devastated districts. His mother died immediately when their house collapsed. His brothers, who were playing outside, survived. The injured Sujal stayed beside his mother's body for one-and-a-half days without food or water until he was rescued.

He is now at the SOS relief camp at Kavre where he is being treated for his fractured leg. SOS youth volunteers are going all out to care for him. Meanwhile, his father, Raju, a watchman in Saudi Arabia, has been reunited with Sujal and comforts him when he wakes up, crying piteously for his mother. However, Raju knows that he will have to return to Saudi Arabia because he has to provide for his three sons.

Then there are three siblings who have found refuge in the SOS Children's Village in Gandaki after the death of their parents and youngest sibling in the collapse of the Dharahara monument in Kathmandu. And there are many more such cases.

One of the pillars of the SOS work in Nepal is the setting up of childcare spaces in tandem with SOS relief camps. Shubha Murthi, International Director Asia, SOS Children's Villages International, says these popular spaces aim at "exactly the children who really need care because there is a huge risk of child trafficking and other such serious problems. Here we make sure that there is a really protected and caring environment for children where they can come and have a little trauma healing in the form of recreational activities like painting, playing,



Children drawing in a child relief centre in Bhaktapur, Nepal

AJIT KRISHNA



Shubha Murthi

**'SOS is trying to focus on the most needy communities. We help families to restart their livelihoods by providing them a Home in a Box with basic essential household items and food stuff for at least one week.'**

singing and acting. And you can see that once they are here their trauma is forgotten. Probably it comes back at night or when they sleep but in the day you see them playing and running around the camps." So far 1,215 traumatised children are being protected and cared for in 16 childcare spaces.

These spaces, says Shree Shankar Pradhananga, National Director of SOS Children's Villages Nepal, also help parents and family members to "take care of the children so that they can focus on their work of clearing the debris, collecting their belongings from the collapsed houses and relief material from the government and other organisations".

Another focus area for SOS is partnering with the

government for optimum disaster response and healthcare for the children and their families.

"What we are planning is to not only provide relief, but also help with rebuilding and rehabilitation," says Murthi, who is steering SOS' teams in Nepal and has first-hand experience of SOS' emergency responses in the wake of the 2004 tsunami, the Sri Lankan civil war and the typhoon in Tacloban, in the Philippines.

While four relief camps have been set up by SOS, rehabilitation efforts will take their own time.

"SOS is trying to focus on the most needy communities affected by the earthquake. In these communities we help families to restart their livelihoods by providing them a Home in a Box with basic essential household items and food stuff for at least one week," says Pradhananga.

SOS is also identifying 1,000 families it can support through its Family Strengthening programme. In two or three villages, which have seen the most destruction and the villagers are economically deprived, plans are being drawn up to build houses for 300 victims of the earthquake. Rebuilding four governments schools will be another SOS endeavour. ■



# Doon's all-weather hero

**Rakesh Agrawal**  
Dehradun

WHEN Anand Sharma joined Dehradun's Meteorological Centre 13 years ago, it used to be the butt of jokes. The Met Centre's weather forecasts were so wildly inaccurate that people giggled at its predictions. If the weatherman said it would rain, people left their umbrellas behind.

In his years at the Met Centre, Sharma has transformed it into a modern, scientific facility. The Met Centre is now valued for its timely and accurate forecasts.

More important, the Met Centre reaches out to people. It provides weather information to farmers through radio and SMS. This has saved crops from being destroyed by untimely rain, a growing menace caused by climate change.

On 27 April, Dehradun's Meteorological Centre was adjudged the best Met Centre in India by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) under the 'Early warning for disaster mitigation' category.

Anand Sharma, chief of the Met Centre, received ₹1 lakh and a citation from Babul Supriyo, Minister of State for Urban Development, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, at a function in New Delhi.

The Met department's most accurate prediction was in June 2013 when it predicted the possibility of very heavy rainfall. The state's bureaucracy ignored this warning, dismissing the Met department's forecasts as routine. Torrential rain battered the Garhwal region, followed by floods in which thousands of pilgrims and locals on the Char Dham *yatra* lost their lives.

After earning an M.Phil degree in environmental science from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Sharma went to the US on a UNDP-WMO fellowship to work on early weather warning sys-



India's best Met Centre: Anand Sharma interacting with students

tems. He was very clear that he wanted to return and use his knowledge for his own country.

When he joined the Met department, the state of Uttarakhand had just been formed. The Met department had only a couple of rooms on the Survey of India campus and no infrastructure. Today, because of his efforts and persistence, it has a new building inside a sprawling campus.

Since he has been working in Uttarakhand for 13 years, Sharma understands the geography and culture of the mountains. "We provide a five-day medium-range weather forecast and advisory to farmers on Tuesdays and Fridays through radio and SMS on Kisan Portal," he says. His ultimate aim is to make India a climate-ready nation and thereby make farmers, ordinary people, ecosystems and economies resistant to the vagaries of the weather.

His timely warnings have helped many farmers. "I heard Sharmaji's warning on the radio that after two days it would rain heavily. I immediately har-

vested my standing wheat crop and I was saved," says a thankful Abdul Rahman of Pathri village, Haridwar district.

Umesh Singh, 48, a farmer from Thano village in Dehradun district, says: "I just called him yesterday to know if I should harvest potato and he said yes."

Until now, the Met Centre had limited resources and instruments, which are crucial for making reliable weather forecasts. But Sharma's consistent efforts are yielding results: "Three Doppler radars have been sanctioned at Mussoorie, Uttarkashi and Nainital. But Uttarkashi and Nainital have exposure condition problems, so we are considering Almora," he says.

Exposure condition means if the site on which the Doppler radar is being placed has tall hills nearby, its signals will be obstructed and defeat the entire purpose of the exercise.

A number of Automatic Weather Stations and Automatic Rain Gauges have been installed and more instruments are in the

pipeline under the Integrated Himalayan Meteorology project.

Little wonder that Sharma has become extremely popular with ordinary folk. "He has captured people's imagination," says Prof. V.K. Jain, Vice-Chancellor, Doon University. Many NGO leaders like the legendary Chandi Prasad Bhatt of Dasholi Gram Swaraj Mandal of Gopeshwar, Chamoli district, have also lauded his work.

The state bureaucracy is taking his department very seriously now. When he predicted the possibility of heavy rains in the hills in mid-April, they stopped all preparations for the Char Dham *yatra*. The June 2013 tragedy is still fresh in people's minds. And the *yatra* route is not in prime condition.

"He is an asset not just for Uttarakhand, but for the entire country," said Harish Rawat, Chief Minister, Uttarakhand, in a letter of appreciation sent to Sharma after the Centre won the HUDCO award. ■

## SAMITA'S WORLD

by SAMITA RATHOR

WHY DOES MY BODY GET HOT EVERY TIME I EAT FISH?



'COS MERCURY LEVELS IN THE SEA ARE RISING!



SAMITA



# NGOs benefit from standards

PICTURES BY AJIT KRISHNA



Cherag Chatwal: 'Reputed funding agencies prefer accredited NGOs'

**Chetna Verma**  
New Delhi

WITH over 30 years experience in natural resource management, the N.M. Sadguru Foundation, headquartered in Dahod, Gujarat, is one of India's most reputed NGOs. Yet, it opted for accreditation by Credibility Alliance, a consortium of voluntary organisations committed to enhancing accountability and transparency through good governance practices.

Accreditation, however, is not the norm in the voluntary sector. This was apparent recently when the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) cancelled the registration of nearly 9,000 NGOs for violation of the Foreign Contribution Registration Act (FCRA) and for not filing income tax returns.

"At such times, reputation doesn't work. Your account details, balance sheets and FCRA details speak for you," says Kanhaiya Chaudhary, Chief Executive Officer, N.M. Sadguru Foundation.

Annual reports, accounts, FCRA details and project reports can be produced anytime if they are prepared under expert guidance. "The laws are complicated and require intensive knowledge in order to avoid violation, even unintentionally," says Chaudhary, whose organisation has been accredited by Credibility Alliance (CA).

The Sadguru Foundation had approached CA because its director, Harnath Jagawat, was part of the inception team that led to the formation of CA. "He knew the importance of getting accredited by CA," says Kanhaiya, who believes that CA has helped the organi-

sation maintain transparency not only financially but also at the level of governance.

He points out that being accredited by an umbrella organisation doesn't necessarily bring in donors but cements ties with them by endorsing the NGO's work.

Of the two million registered NGOs, only 518 have been accredited by CA. "Half the NGOs are running only on paper and do not have any presence on the ground. Many are working in remote corners and are not aware of accreditation and its benefits," points out Tejinder Kaur, Deputy Manager, CA.

Accreditation of NGOs is a relatively new concept in India. "Over the last 10 years we have observed greater acceptance towards it from the voluntary sector. Every month, we receive requests from 25-30 organisations for accreditation. Earlier, it would be much less. We have also evolved in the last few years, making ourselves more approachable," says Tejinder.



Credibility Alliance's office in west Delhi

CA was conceptualised 15 years ago when like-minded people from within the social sector came together to make the voluntary sector more transparent. "But before it was registered in May 2004 as an independent, not-for-profit organisation, a lot of hard work had gone into developing a set of 'Minimum Norms for Good Governance, Accountability and Transparency of the Voluntary Sector,' which were then circulated to over 15,000 partners, members and affiliates. More than 500 organisations provided feedback, with 94 per cent agreeing on the need for minimum norms for the voluntary sector," said Cherag Chatwal, Director, Finance and Operations, CA.

Many donors approve of an organisation only when it has been accredited by CA. "Reputed organisations like Oxfam India, before giving a grant to any NGO, make sure it has been accredited by us. This has also helped NGOs approach us on their own to get the accreditation," says Chatwal.

NGOs approach CA as they want to work transparently but are hampered by lack of information and awareness about the law and seek guidance. "There are many organisations who have invested their heart and soul in their work but for them documentation, board meetings and accounts is just another world," says Tejinder.

The process of accreditation takes 20-25 days. "The NGO sends us the filled-in accreditation form available on our website along with all the required documents like annual reports, minutes of board meetings, annual audited accounts and so on. After review, an introductory letter, MoU and final accreditation form are sent to the NGO. Our regional assessors then visit the organisation for two days to check their on-ground presence, meet their board members, interact with the beneficiaries, check accounts and, based on their evaluation, share the report with CA," explains Chatwal.

CA's coordinator then prepares a factsheet based on the minimum norms related to identity, objectives, operations, governance, accountability and transparency. It is presented before a Central Accreditation Committee (CAC) that comprises four-five experts from the sector who meet every month to review the cases. If satisfied with the documents and the fact sheets, they approve the accreditation. If they have doubts, the file is put on hold for further clarification.

Cases put on hold require extra effort. Instead of rejecting them, CA works towards building the capacity of such organisations. "Based on the documents sent by the organisation, we identify the weak areas and hold workshops to strengthen their skills and capacities on how to demonstrate greater transparency and accountability," explains Tejinder.

Accreditation is for five years. CA follows up with the NGOs-VOs regularly so that following the norms becomes a habit. Accredited organisations receive benefits like wider reach with the Credibility Alliance and GuideStar India websites displaying their profiles, enhanced prospects of attracting financial and other forms of support from various stakeholders, and discounted fees to access capacity-building support through various workshops.

A fee is charged for the service, depending on the grant the NGO-VO receives. ■

Website: [www.credibilityalliance.org](http://www.credibilityalliance.org) Phone: 011-6472 2849



# Haldikhol is now less poor

**Bharat Dogra**  
Nuapada

**T**RIBAL families from Haldikhol village in Sinapali block of Nuapada district in Odisha used to migrate every year to toil in smoky brick kilns till midnight in Telangana. They didn't have much choice. Their small plots of farmland were barren, unproductive and yielded very little.

Nuapada borders Kalahandi district, famous for its poverty figures. Nearly 78 per cent of Nuapada's population is classified as living below the poverty line (BPL).

Things began to look up for Haldikhol when former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee took an interest in the district. He began to support work being done by the Sahbagi Vikash Abhiyan (SVA) during his tenure as PM from 1998-2004. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) decided to provide special assistance to SVA to improve conditions in Nuapada.

Some 15 years later, due to SVA's efforts, farming is thriving in Haldikhol. The village now has an onion storing facility and a small rice mill. It is in the process of setting up a mango-processing unit to manufacture pickles and jams, assisted by SVA.

Thanks to help from the PMO, SVA got more activists interested. They sat down with villagers and prepared micro-level development plans. Such discussions took place in a few more villages in Nuapada district. Group meetings were held. The outcome of such talks was that villagers began to understand that they could improve the economy of their villages with the help of SVA and by tapping into several existing schemes.

NABARD offered to provide finance for improving farming practices. The project was named Wadi. It was decided to concentrate on developing horticulture in the village. SVA trained farmers and helped them take up soil erosion and land-levelling work, increasing irrigation and preparing the ground for a mix of horticulture and agriculture.

Villagers soon began to see their farmland becoming green and productive, and grew very enthusiastic. They started devoting more and more time to their fields and protected their crops from wild animals.

Their hard work, creativity and enthusiasm, backed by SVA's support, improved crop production and the incomes of farmers began to go up in a short time. Many farmers took to growing and selling vegetables. Next year, when their mango trees will begin to yield fruit, farmers hope to boost their earnings further.

SVA and its volunteers also ensured that the tribal farmers got land rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA). They lobbied hard with the district administration for settlement of claims. Once land

rights were secured, tribal farmers in Haldikhol and neighbouring villages were motivated to work with even greater dedication since they knew that they now owned their fields.

Santosh Majhi, a tribal farmer, owns five acres, including some land settled recently under the FRA. Apart from cultivating paddy and millets, he has taken up horticulture under the NABARD-spon-

out land levelling and erosion prevention work, and take up horticulture. He built a sturdy fence around his field, on which he grows okra, chillies, brinjals, beans, tomatoes and green leafy vegetables. He has also planted 45 mango trees and 12 lemon trees. He too practises organic farming.

Haldhar says he has been able to grow and sell significant quantities of onions and onion seedlings

BHARAT DOGRA



A self-help group of tribal women now cultivates vegetables and incomes have increased

**Things began to look up for Haldikhol when former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee took an interest in the district. He began to support work being done by the Sahbagi Vikash Abhiyan.**

sored project in a big way. He has planted 42 mango trees and taken to growing vegetables. Majhi's field is resplendent with beans, raddish, brinjals, onions and green vegetables. He is also growing spices like turmeric and coriander.

Majhi is devoted to organic farming. He prepares his own compost, vermi-compost and organic pest repellent.

He says both he and his wife work equally hard. His elder son pitches in by ploughing the fields. When we meet his son, he is in jeans and a T-shirt emblazoned with a message: 'Get in tune — Art is a form of Catharsis'. Despite wearing urban clothes, he is skilled at ploughing and helps his father.

Majhi is enthusiastic about the new opportunities that have presented themselves to the people of his village. Like several farmers in his village, he now spends a lot of his time on his fields which have been improved by soil conservation work. He irrigates his fields with water from a borewell.

Haldhar, also a farmer in Haldikhol village, says he too received assistance to develop his land, carry

recently. He also earns money from the *mahua* and *chiraunji* trees on his farm. But, he says, irrigation is still an issue. Water from his well is not bountiful and his brinjal plants dried up.

Both farmers agree that their earnings have increased. The wages they received under NABARD's Wadi project and proceeds from sale of farm produce enabled them to avoid migrating to the brick kilns this year. Their children are now able to attend school regularly.

The SVA has also built an onion storage facility in this village so that farmers can store their crop until they can get a higher price. A cottage industry in agro-processing units, like a small rice-mill, has been set up. A mango-processing unit is likely to be started soon so that the expected mango harvest can be used to manufacture value-added products like pickles, jams and juice.

What is equally interesting is how skillfully tribal farmers have taken to organic farming. These small fields with their bountiful harvest are a symbol of hope for Nuapada. ■



# WHY BJP FAILED TO MAKE

## And what this means for West Bengal

Subir Roy  
Kolkata

THE sweeping victory of the Trinamool Congress in the urban local body elections in May across West Bengal was totally unexpected until about a couple of months before polling. The ruling Trinamool Congress was under attack from two sides. The wages of the Saradha chit fund scam in which thousands of poor villagers had lost their precious savings were at last becoming payable with the CBI investigations into it closing in on important Trinamool leaders. Plus, a strong anti-Muslim sentiment was holding sway in urban West Bengal which was veering towards supporting the BJP.

Then, things changed quite abruptly. A close look at this process as also at how public and political life work in West Bengal will provide an accurate interpretation of the results and a sense of what lies ahead. What are the state's prospects for growth and greater social progress? Aside from that, it is also academically interesting to determine how change takes place in one corner of a so-called democracy where literacy levels are high even as poverty remains a stubborn reality.

Kerala, at one stage, shared many attributes with West Bengal — high literacy, Left orientation and poor governance, and lagging growth. But Kerala, by exporting skilled workers to the Gulf (which was enabled by its high literacy), was able to sustain a higher growth rate in per capita income even as West Bengal suffered from lack of any impetus for growth in per capita income after the effect of tenancy reform (Operation Barga) and the resultant improvement in agricultural growth petered out. During 2000-1 to 2008-9, per capita net state domestic product (per capita income of the state) of Kerala rose by an annual average rate of 6.9 per cent, whereas for West Bengal it was 5.3 per cent.

In the 2014 general election, the BJP in West Bengal, riding the Narendra Modi wave, put up a remarkable performance. It raised its share of the popular vote by 10.6 per cent (compared to the previous elections) to reach an impressive 16.8 per cent. It did even better in the two Kolkata seats, securing a massive 25 per cent of the votes. This put it in the lead in 29 of the city's municipal wards, compared to victory in just three in 2010. It seemed there was no holding it back and the municipal polls across the state this year were looked forward to with excitement or trepidation, depending on which side you were on.

The electoral numbers had an impact on the sentiment on the ground. After Modi in his election campaign had raised the issue of illegal migration



TMC supporters celebrate their party's resounding success in the civic polls

**In the 2014 general election, the BJP in West Bengal, riding the Narendra Modi wave, put up a remarkable performance. It raised its share of the popular vote by 10.6 per cent.**

into the state from Bangladesh, the communal temperature in middle class discourse in Kolkata rose significantly. Suddenly, a lot of educated middle class Bengalis came out in the open with strong anti-Muslim sentiments. When a bomb blast in the state's Bardhaman town killed two suspected Indian Mujahideen terrorists in October last year, the link between illegal migration and Muslim terror was established in the middle class mind.

Kolkata is considered the bell weather of political

change in the state and the 2010 municipal elections had proved a harbinger of the electoral victory of the Trinamool Congress in the Assembly elections the next year. The rise of the BJP after the parliamentary elections was expected to pay it handsome dividends in the municipal elections and throw open the continued dominance of the Trinamool in the state after the Assembly elections due in 2016.

But when the results came, the BJP had suffered a setback. From being ahead in 29 Kolkata municipal wards in the parliamentary elections, it managed to win only seven in the municipal corporation elections and the Trinamool won 114, more than twice the 48 wards it had won in 2010. In comparison, the Left Front managed to sort of hold its ground by winning 15 wards and the Congress managed not to get wiped out by winning five.

Why did the BJP fall on its face? Two developments are worth noting. In early March, Trinamool supremo and state Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee went to Delhi and met the Prime Minister. After that, suddenly, the CBI seemed to stall in its inexorable march towards tightening the noose around one Trinamool leader after another over the Saradha



# IT IN KOLKATA



chit fund scam. Mukul Roy, the number two leader in the Trinamool, somehow managed not to get arrested, unlike another senior party leader, Madan Mitra, earlier. The buzz in the state was: Had a deal been struck between Modi and Banerjee, whereby the Trinamool would support the NDA in Parliament to pass crucial Bills in return for easing up on the investigations? In the event, the Trinamool helped see a lot of legislation through, including the Bill enabling a land boundary agreement with Bangladesh (it had opposed this when Manmohan Singh was prime minister) while of course holding firm on its opposition to the land acquisition Bill.

The second development was that later in March there were unseemly scenes before the BJP office in Kolkata when aspirants for tickets for the coming municipal elections fought. Suddenly, it became clear that the West Bengal BJP looked far from being a responsible entity ready to take over power. After the elections, Modi chose to launch three key national social security schemes during a visit to West Bengal with Banerjee also on the dais. From hostility, it was just short of bonhomie. It goes without saying that illegal migration has ceased to be an

active topic of conversation among Kolkata's middle class.

There are good reasons for the Trinamool to win in Kolkata. It has given a far better account of itself in its five years in power, compared to the earlier Left Front rule. The city looks cleaner, its roads are in better shape and the entire lower (east end) stretch of the city along the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass which connects it to the airport – a growth area – has now been supplied with treated drinking water from the Ganga. This has allowed people to

**Rapid development work has been undertaken in Jangalmahal. West Bengal is the only state where the extremist challenge has been successfully countered by development.**

stop imbibing the distasteful ground water which carried the threat of arsenic poisoning. Also, the city's finances are in better shape as reported earlier in *Civil Society*.

There is also some positive sentiment in favour of the chief minister and her government in the eastern part of the state, the Jangalmahal area, which was in the grip of extremists till the Assembly elections. Rapid development work has been undertaken in the area and it is widely recognised that West Bengal is the only state where the extremist challenge has been successfully countered by development.

Though a lot can change in politics in a short while, as happened during March and early April, as things stand, the Trinamool is expected to be able to hold its ground in West Bengal in next year's Assembly elections.

What does this mean for the future of the state? It is marked by a poor standard of governance (efficiency of its administration), low level of investment in industry, and endemic social violence. In recent months, the state's finance minister, Amit Mitra, has categorically stated that the government has enough land (over one lakh acres) for setting up new industrial ventures. This is to counter the impression created by the inability of the Tatas to proceed with the Nano factory at Singur because of failure to secure land.

If land is not an issue, what is? The level of administrative efficiency is a historical legacy and the state government is trying to change it by increasing computerisation. This has had a positive impact on its tax administration. Assuming other aspects of administration are not worsening, where is the real deficit? Anecdotal evidence, gleaned from businessmen, indicates that prospective investors are wary as they feel that the cost of doing business is too high. There is too much of rent-seeking and violence in the state. You have to pay too

much additionally to do business and disruption of business, be it due to local issues or state-wide *bandhs*, is excessive.

During the 1970s and '80s, the Left rulers of West Bengal lived in constant fear of dismissal and sought to consolidate their grassroots position by ushering in Panchayati Raj and the famous programme to give cultivation rights to sharecroppers through Operation Barga. The '90s brought in two developments – positive and negative. The dwindling strength of the Congress at the Centre made the chances of dismissal remote. Simultaneously, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the serious setback to global communism led to a loss of ideology for the West Bengal Leftists. This changed the character of Left rule. The Left hierarchy became the established order and acquired the financial attributes of a ruling class. The money allocated to the panchayats was extensively siphoned off to form the base of a parallel economy of rent-seekers and local musclemen.

Public disillusionment with the Left first burst into the open in late 2007 when several districts were affected by food riots centred around a collapsed public distribution system. The common belief was that ration shop owners, with links to the Left hierarchy, were selling in the open market grain meant to be distributed through the fair price shops. Not just ration shop owners, but dealers in fertilisers and seeds were also a part of the vested interests with links to the Left hierarchy and controlled credit to farmers.

The riots turned out to be the beginning of the end of Left rule. The musclemen who were its creation sensed the popular anger and changed sides. Trinamool success in one election after another followed, climaxing with the victory in the Assembly elections in 2011. In locality after locality, the CPI (M) office simply changed colour and became the Trinamool office and the toughs hanging around rooted for the new rulers.

Today, these rent-seekers move about in motorcycle gangs and their leaders in SUVs. Rent-seeking is widespread. To do any kind of civil construction, conclude a land deal or bring in a truck with goods for a city market, payment has to be made. Even a lowly cycle rickshaw *wallah* has to pay a few thousand rupees for the right to belong to a particular rickshaw stand.

The common refrain among the Opposition and the media is that free and fair elections are impossible because of the rent-seeking toughs on the side of the Trinamool. As for the violence, they point to the periodic blasts that rent the air, the most recent being one in a so-called illegal cracker factory which killed as many as 12 people, including several children. Then there was another blast at the same devastated site a few days later, like an earthquake aftershock. The arbiter of public life as soon as you get out of the main urban areas is the community of musclemen, with the police force having extensively abdicated.

While it is true that it is difficult for any party to win elections without the support of the toughs, as recent history has shown, they can switch sides when they perceive the popular mood changing and, importantly, they are among the first to sense this as they operate at grassroots level. All this, then, constitutes the essential dynamics of West Bengal politics and is the reason fresh investment is so wary of coming into the state. ■



# Kerala's mighty mango tree

## Kuttiattoor yields too much fruit

**Shree Padre**  
Kannur

A 45-minute drive from the city of Kannur in north Kerala is a mango paradise. The two villages of Kuttiattoor and Maniyoor are blessed with mango trees so fecund that each year thousands of tonnes are harvested between March and May. A single tree can yield between three and eight quintals, which is three to four times more than the average produce of a mango tree elsewhere in the country.

The two villages comprise the Kuttiattoor panchayat. 'Kuttiattoor' means mango and the village and panchayat are named after the fruit. There are 7,000 households here. Bringing the mangoes down safely is challenging and expert harvesters are known to charge as much as ₹15,000 a day.

Nobody knows precisely how many mangoes the trees here yield and what their value is. "But even by modest estimates, Kuttiattoor probably produces 4,000 to 5,000 tonnes of mangoes," says V.O. Prabhakaran, a local farmer and a retired agricultural officer. "If we calculate at the average consumer price of ₹40 per kg, Kuttiattoor produces an impressive ₹16 to ₹20 crore worth of mangoes very year."

This should make Kuttiattoor a very rich panchayat. But, in reality, farmers here earn much less. Most households hand the trees over to traders for as little as 20 per cent of the market value paid upfront.

According to local lore, a gentleman from a Nambiar household brought five mango saplings from the king of Neeleswaram. Two established households, Kavu Illam and Chakothe Tharavad, were the first to plant them.

The saplings flourished and began yielding a good crop. The mango variety was named the Nambiar *manga* (mango). In those days, growing fruit trees was more or less the prerogative of Brahmin families. After land reforms took place in Kerala, other communities acquired land and became interested in growing mangoes. The Nambiar mango became popular in a particular area. To identify its geographical spread, the Nambiar mango was renamed the Kuttiattoor mango. This variety has unique features that make it eligible for a Geographical Indication (GI).

### TASTE OF ITS OWN

The Kuttiattoor mango might not be able to rival the famed Alphonso in taste but it is not inferior either. It has a thin skin, is fibrous and moderately sweet in taste.

The mango season in Kuttiattoor begins in March and ends in May. The fruit is marketed in nearby towns and cities like Thaliparamb, Thalasseri, Badagara and Kannur. When the season begins, the mango costs ₹100 per kg. During the peak season, the price of the Kuttiattoor mango drops to ₹50 or even ₹30 per kg.

"We growers end up getting a paltry 20 per cent of the actual value of our mangoes," says B. Krishnan, Secretary of the Kuttiattoor Mango Growers Committee. "It is the *pattakkars* or the crop contractors who



Flooded with mangoes: Kuttiattoor has a processing unit too



PICTURES BY SHREE PADRE



Harvesting mangoes from huge trees is a big headache



Catching mangoes that fall to prevent damaging the fruit

dictate terms. More than 100 such middlemen operate here.”

Since trees laden with fruit are a challenge to harvest, the tree owner has to hire a harvester. “So most homes give their trees on crop contract for a small amount of money,” says Krishnan. A tree that was given on a crop contract of ₹20,000 a decade ago is still talked about. It has become a local legend.

Gopalan Nambiar, 70, of Veshala hamlet, has 40 Kuttiattoor mango trees, around 30-40 years old, on his two acres. He says yields are lower this year because of unseasonal rain. “The crop contractors pay me ₹10,000 when yields are good. This year the mango crop is not that good. I guess I will get ₹2,000,” he says. But his total mango crop this year won’t be less than two tonnes.

“Out of all the mangoes I have eaten,” says V.V. Jobi, “the ones from Veshala are the most superior.”

Most crop contractors come from other parts of Kerala. But some are locals. Abdulla Koya, 58, runs a small shop in Kuttiattoor but he also works as a crop contractor. He says large trees yield around half a tonne of fruit. After ripening the mangoes, he transports them to nearby markets in Thalassery, Kannur and Kozhikode.

“Until last year, we were ripening the fruit with calcium carbide. The advantage is that the fruit ripens quickly and there is no wastage. If we use the traditional method of ripening by covering the mangoes with paddy, it takes a week.

**Since trees laden with fruit are a challenge to harvest, the tree owner has to hire a harvester. ‘So most homes give their trees on crop contract for a small amount of money,’ says Krishnan.**

In the process, about half the fruit gets spoiled,” he complains.

Mohanam, a local farmer, has been doubling as a *pattakar* for the past 35 years. A tree needs to be harvested four or five times a season, he says. Mohanam has an advantage since he knows how to harvest the fruit himself. Yet, at times, he too has to hire an additional hand. He collects, on an average, around eight tonnes of fruit per day. “I earn around ₹30,000 per tonne. The peak season lasts 60 days.”

Strangely, mango trees thrive here though the topsoil is not more than six inches thick and the subsoil is hard. A five-year-old Kuttiattoor tree flourishes in front of the panchayat office. Gopalan’s biggest tree has grown to a height of 20 metres and covers about 120 square feet. Locals recall an old tree that had occupied about 0.05 acres.

A. Prabhakaran, a retired teacher and social worker, recalls giving one of his trees on a crop contract of ₹15,000 about 20 years ago. E.K. Chandrasan sold four of his trees, that were perhaps 200 years old, for ₹2 lakh four years ago. “This is nothing,” he says, smiling. “The oldest tree that we had in Chathoth Tharavad — it might have been 300 years old — fetched us nearly ₹1 lakh decades ago. Of course, we didn’t use the money for ourselves. We donated it to a temple.”

The Kuttiattoor mango is poly-embryonic. The seedling possesses mother characters. In fact, grafting is totally unknown here. There are no nurseries. By and large, this variety is an alternate bearer. Some trees yield fruit on different branches with a one-year gap in between, thus ensuring fruit every year.

Villagers in Kuttiattoor continue to plant new seedlings. But they do nothing after that. They don’t irrigate the young tree or fertilise it. Neither do they raise orchards or plant systematically. Pruning and plant protection measures don’t cross their minds. As a result, most large trees show signs of neglect. Some are blighted with parasites.

“A house without a mango tree is very rare in our panchayat,” says Prabhakaran. “If we get a fair price for our fruit, these trees are enough to take care of a family’s annual expenditure.” The Kuttiattoor trees are deeply appreciated by the villagers. “This mango tree is a great asset of ours,” says Chandrasan. “Which other variety can provide you with so much fruit without asking for attention or expensive inputs?”





*The topsoil is sparse, yet the mango tree blossoms*



*Kuttiattoor is producing three mango products*

But for villagers to get the right price for their mangoes is not easy. Perhaps due to lack of local leadership or vote-bank politics, Kuttiattoor is a neglected panchayat. It has very little infrastructure though it is close to Kannur, the district's capital.

"I think this is the only panchayat in Kerala that doesn't even have an ATM," grumbled an official who has been transferred here from south Kerala.

Kuttiattoor has few parallels in the country. Almost every household in this panchayat produces a sackful of mangoes every year in a compact area.

But due to shortage of labour, the absence of a farmer-friendly supply chain, a marketing set-up and so on, until last year a major part of the harvest was going waste.

For four years Chandrahasan tried to sell his mangoes directly. None of the other tree owners have tried it. He used to take his best fruit to Mananthavady in a jeep. "The advantage of selling there is that they don't grade our fruit into first-class and second-class," he says. "I was getting paid around ₹40 per kg."

He says harvesters have become less efficient over the years. "Earlier, they used to harvest four to six quintals a day. Now they only collect two quintals."

This year, the problem seemed to worsen. The crop contractors lost interest because the Kerala government came down heavily on chemical ripening of fruit with calcium carbide after the media highlighted the issue. A lot of mangoes remained unsold.

To turn the situation to their advantage, last year the Kuttiattoor Mango Growers Committee decided to sell chemical-free mangoes directly to consumers. They informed all mango tree owners that the committee itself would procure a small amount of the fruit at ₹30 per kg. The farmers began bringing freshly harvested mangoes to the committee's office. The fruit was ripened the traditional way.

So now their mangoes had two advantages over other varieties. One, they were organically grown and, second, they were not chemically ripened. The committee offered the fruit at ₹35 per kg to consumers. Luckily, TV channels did a story and thereby spread the word. Consumers from nearby urban areas made a bee-



*The ripening chamber for mangoes*



*Kuttiattoor mangoes have thin skin and are sweet*

line to Kuttiattoor and the committee managed to sell seven tonnes of ripe mangoes. But, above the earning, the experience instilled confidence among villagers. They realised they could sell their fruit directly.

This year the committee began work a bit earlier. Krishnan said they procured 15 tonnes of unripe mangoes. After ripening, they were left with 10 tonnes as the rest had got spoiled. But their total turnover was ₹5 lakh.

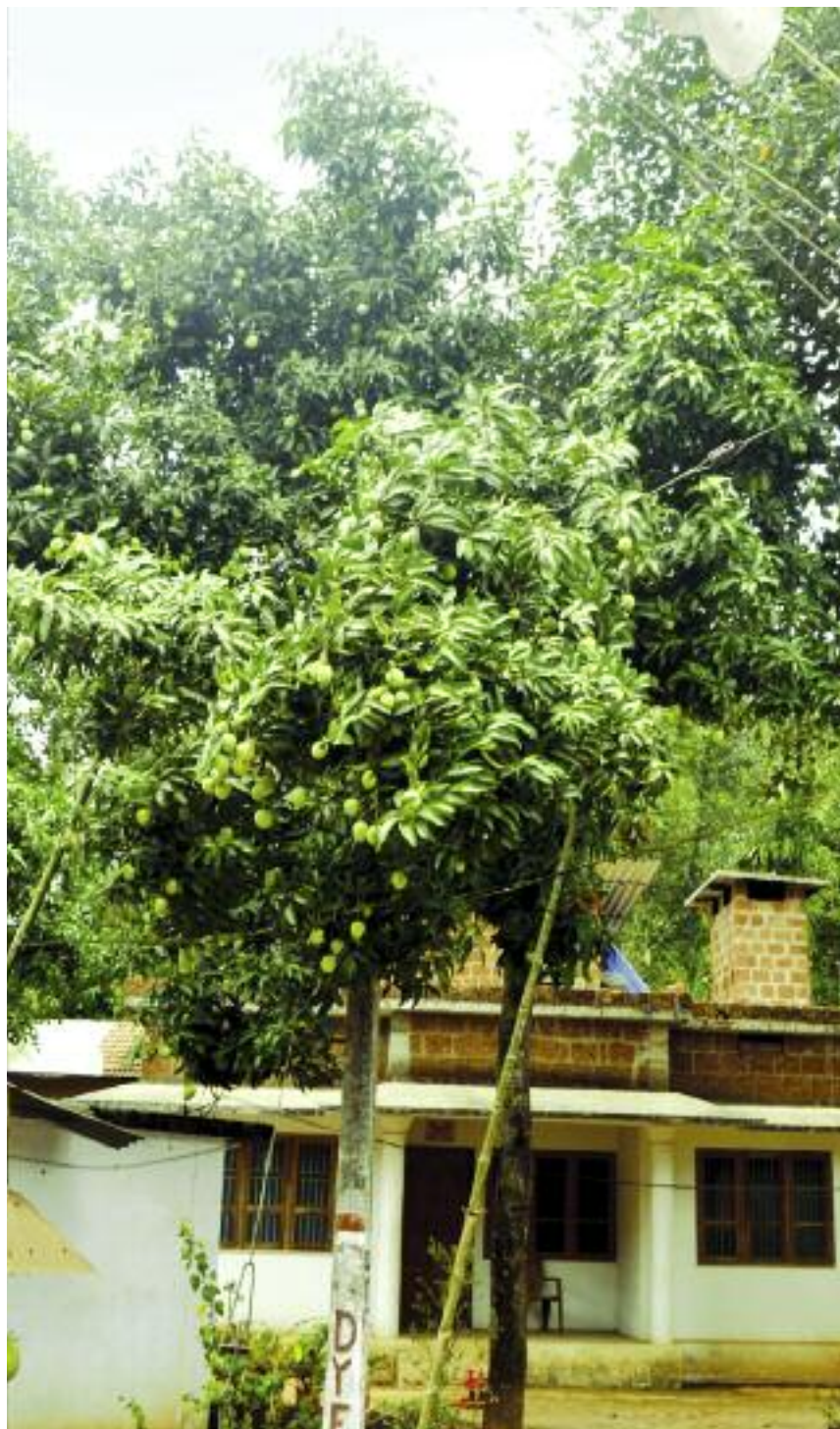
A second initiative also holds out hope for farmers. Three years ago, a food processing unit was started by the Kannur Krishi Vijnana Kendra (KVK) with financial help from the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana. The Kuttiattoor Mango Growers Committee is running the unit which produces squash, jam and pickle from Kuttiattoor mangoes.

The unit, located on a hillock, has ample land of around 1.5 acres, and an open well with plenty of water. What it lacks is building space and storage facilities. Its total processing capacity is 15 tonnes, which is very little when compared to the whopping quantity of wastage. The products don't have a robust presence in local markets either.

Kuttiattoor mango trees have now spread to the neighbouring panchayats of Mayyil, Kolenchery, Kodali and Munderi too. "Our mango seedlings have spread all over Kerala," says Prabhakaran. "Officials who are posted to Kannur invariably take some mango saplings to grow near their homes."

Yet the Kuttiattoor mango is not well-known in Kerala. The popular variety in the state is the Muthalamada mango that is the first to arrive in the market. But





Each house has a mango tree

its reputation has taken a beating in recent years because of widespread publicity about the toxic insecticides that are sprayed on it.

Another move that could make the Kuttiaattoor mango better known is the GI. Kerala's agricultural department is taking all the necessary steps to make this happen.

## HELP AT HAND

A team of scientists from the Indian Institute of Horticulture Research (IIHR) visited Kuttiaattoor in the second week of April after they heard of the plight of the Kuttiaattoor mango farmers. Dr M.R. Dinesh, Principal Scientist and Head, Division of Fruit Crops, said the fruit had good potential. It could be processed or eaten fresh.

Since the Kuttiaattoor mango is harvested right at the start of the season, it has two advantages. Most mango-processing units lie idle in April, waiting for raw material to come in. Linkages can be made with such factories. The mangoes can be quickly sold there. Thanks to the Kuttiaattoor mango, processing factories can begin work one-and-a-half months earlier.

Second, since the Kuttiaattoor mango harvests early, it escapes the possibility of being attacked by fruit flies.

Another advantage these mangoes have is that they are all more or less of the same size in a bunch. "In other bunch-bearing varieties like Amrapali, if there

are six to eight fruits in a bunch, five will be smaller and two larger. But with Kuttiaattoor, all the fruits in a bunch are more or less the same size."

Dr Dinesh also says steps need to be taken to prevent the fruit from rotting during ripening. Currently, nearly half the crop goes waste.

He says the mangoes face three problems: fruit flies, the nut-weevil menace and anthracnose disease. He suggested mango farmers hang fruit fly traps on their trees in February when the fruit begins to mature. These can be bought from KVK.

"Keeping the area clean is also a good preventive measure. Where the tree is close to the home and floors are kept clean, we noticed that there is no fruit fly attack."

To prevent nut weevils from attacking mangoes, he suggested farmers spray a small amount of acephate, a chemical insecticide, twice — once when the mangoes are the size of a lime and the second after a fortnight. The following year, the tree won't need to be sprayed if the nut weevil population has been controlled.

He also suggested a natural method to control nut weevils. He pointed out that old leaves and small pieces of dry wood get accumulated at the point from where the tree develops branches. If this area is cleaned, nut weevils will not proliferate.

To control anthracnose, Dr Dinesh recommends immersing mangoes in warm water of about 45 degrees Celsius with salt for 10 minutes immediately after harvesting. Five per cent salt has to be added to the water.

It is also suggested that the farmers form a federation to market their mangoes. The federation could pack the mangoes in two-kg cardboard boxes, branded 'Kuttiaattoor mangoes', and set up a stall on the National Highway which is about an hour from Kuttiaattoor.

IIHR sources said such a strategy had worked in Chittoor. Earlier, farmers in Chittoor would sell their fruit, grown from seedlings, for a low price under the label of 'local'. Under a UNEP-sponsored project, IIHR encouraged the farmers to market their fruit in a more organised way. They packed their fruit in corrugated cardboard boxes with a label brandishing the project's name and the UNEP seal.

"They sold 2.5-kg boxes for ₹80. The farmers are very happy now."

The scientists suggested that Kuttiaattoor farmers try out an inexpensive ripening chamber that IIHR has developed. It can ripen mangoes in about five to six days without using chemicals.

If the Kuttiaattoor community gears up for action and begins planning straightaway, it can profit from the next fruiting season. Things have started moving under the leadership of the Kuttiaattoor Mango Growers Committee. "We are prepared to put in all effort because, with better prices, these mangoes can be our number one money-spinner," says C. Sujatha, president of the panchayat.

The panchayat is putting together a 'high-powered committee' to chalk out an action plan for mango development under the guidance of IIHR. That committee will discuss the possibilities of roping in other agencies and whether a second committee is required to prepare a time-bound plan.

On 7 June a seminar will be held at which IIHR scientists will explain the remedial measures needed in detail. They will display their ripening chamber and advise the committee on where they can access funds to begin a Mango Growers' Federation.

Once farmers begin earning more from their fruit, they will be keen to learn more. If the Kuttiaattoor panchayat grabs this opportunity, in the next few years they could transform their destiny. Mango producers could earn ₹30 per kg for their fruit.

Not less than ₹15 crore would flow into Kuttiaattoor, making it prosperous.

In the long run, the villagers will also have to consider grafting this mango variety to contain its height, pruning it and so on.

But before that, the moot question is whether the community will rise to the occasion and take full advantage of their wonderful genetic heritage to usher in a brighter future. ■



Dr M.R. Dinesh

**The scientists suggested that farmers try out an inexpensive ripening chamber that IIHR has developed. It can ripen mangoes in five to six days without using chemicals.**



# BUSINESS

ENTERPRISE | CSR | ICT | GREEN TECH

## Tech tools for NGOs

### Mahiti has inventive solutions

**Frederick Noronha**  
Bengaluru

**L**IKE giant trees, impressive organisations have their beginnings in small seeds or little ideas. Mahiti.org, based in Bengaluru, started in 1998 merely as the IT support team of Samuha, a prominent NGO working in resource-poor areas of north Karnataka. College friends Sunil Abraham and Sreekanth S. Rameshaiah (Sree to friends and clients) were the initial members of the team.

“Samuha’s T. Pradeep was very ambitious about using IT as a tool to enhance social impact and scale. We were encouraged to explore the use of IT beyond the traditional database management systems,” recalls Sree.

After it was incubated by Samuha, Mahiti (which means information) got spun off as an independent entity and has since tried “all alternative forms of being a social initiative”. They finally zeroed in on being a social enterprise and registered as a private limited company, under the leadership of Murray Culshaw, the septuagenarian Briton who has been working with NGOs in India for a quarter of a century, and who joined them as founding chairperson.

Says Sree proudly, “We are a frugal business. Our COO, Chethan Das, is extremely watchful of how money is spent. Since our inception in 2002, Mahiti has made moderate profits every year. We reinvest the profits further for our mission, ‘Tech for Social Good.’”

To do this, they’ve worked on a number of products. They’ve developed Management Information Systems (MIS) which are basically robust databases that can help NGOs crunch data and look for trends or baseline information, outcomes of services and review their work. It allows organisations to really see what impact they are creating, judge the outcomes of their services and find alternative ways to address a certain problem.

Mahiti has also created MIS tools such as OurCrop and OurBank that specifically cater to the needs of the agriculture and micro-finance sectors, respectively.

They develop mobile applications that help in field research, allowing an institution’s staff to gather data and then almost automatically sync it to an MIS that will immediately start analysing it. This is being used by the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO).

Mahiti also develops communication products such as websites and portals for the non-profit sector. They make sure these include design, naviga-



*Sreekanth S. Rameshaiah, co-founder of Mahiti, at his office*

tion and features that cater to their audience — donors, partners and the public at large.

“Web portals look to house a lot of information on a cause or databases of organisations or services that can be accessed by any visitor,” points out Trupti Chengalath, Mahiti’s Head of Communication, who also holds a Master’s degree in criminology.

Mahiti’s services, by way of research and consultancy, help NGOs explore ways to raise support from the people and bolster income, thereby reducing dependency on grants and becoming more sustainable and accountable to the public.

“We also invest our energies in facilitating the use of technology for social good beyond the development of technological solutions through our initiatives in Technology for Communities. This typical-

ly looks at building the capacity of people that do not have access to learning the use of the said technology,” adds Chengalath.

So, are they unique at a national level? Says Chengalath: “There are certainly firms doing some of the things we do and specifically for the NGO sector. But you will find that all these services under one roof would be harder to get.”

But, as Chengalath puts it, there is a growing need to show impact and results of work done and not simply to have good intent while spending public or grant money. This has escalated especially with the introduction of CSR in a big way in India.

NGOs are also becoming more professional about the way they address a community’s problem and want to ensure effectiveness and accountability which technology helps them provide.



“NGOs need to increasingly start raising public support to fund their work and cannot look for foreign income anymore to do so since the priorities of funding agencies have moved away from India,” points out Chengalath.

Mahiti ran their first fund-raising campaign on the Web in 1998. They used satellite imaging to scientifically plan watersheds.

“As we started more and more such projects, we realised we had created a specialised capacity which could be offered to other social initiatives too. In 2002, after extensive deliberations, we spun Mahiti off as an independent social enterprise. It was headed by Sunil then,” says Sree.

The journey, Sree feels, has been a great learning experience. “We started as a three-member team in a 100-sq-foot office. Today, we have grown into a 60-plus member team. We have done more than 1,000 projects and have provided technology support to 300-plus NGOs both in India and elsewhere in the world. The team learns every day. No two interventions are of similar nature. We need to continuously adapt to the social context,” he says.

Through their Convene workshops, they were able to engage with more than 3,000 non-profit leaders and civil society activists from India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Central Asian countries. Mahiti.org believes technology can add value to social initiatives. “This network has enabled creation of many more partnerships and programmes since,” adds Sree.

Convene is a platform for social innovators. The network promotes use of Free/Open Source Software (FOSS) to meet tech-based needs of social development organisations. Members can develop their ideas and projects online through a supportive and collaborative network of peers. Informal learning and local adaptation of initiatives are the focus. On the ground, through international workshops, Convene educates social groups, teachers, students, human rights bodies and civil rights groups about the value of FOSS.

Community adoption of their mobile phone-based interventions was particularly encouraging for the group. The programmes were aimed at the poorest of the poor and Mahiti saw “very successful adoption”.

These projects include MySMENews (a micro-economy news feed through SMS) for micro-entrepreneurs in Kolkata; ArogyaSriini, a community-based PHC monitoring system Mahiti built for the SVYM (Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement); and Namagagi Nave, a mobile-based self-evaluation



*Mahiti has shown how technology can add value to social initiatives*

**‘NGOs need to increasingly start raising public support to fund their work and cannot look for foreign income anymore to do so since the priorities of funding agencies have moved away from India.’**

system for garment factory workers in partnership with the BMST (Bengaluru Medical Services Trust).

Vijay Rasquinha leads Mahiti’s technology innovation efforts. His goal is to specialise in the optimal use of technology in solving problems of impact, reach and scale. Rasquinha graduated in computer science, began his start-up and merged with Mahiti in 2007.

“Our challenges are no different from any other similar entity. Internally, we have to ensure that the staff always finds the work challenging and emotionally satisfying. Externally, our offerings are weighed in comparison to big IT enterprises by those NGOs/iNGOs who have the budget. Emerging initiatives want us to provide solutions at a very lean price point! It’s a challenge,” elaborates Sree.

Chengalath points to other factors: “There are the same challenges that are typically found in any tech sector where salaries offered can be very competitive, there is attrition, and the ‘social sector’ team staff would rather work in an NGO than work in a company that works for NGOs.”

Do young techies look forward to taking on such assignments, or do they see it as not hardcore enough and more ‘social work’? Chengalath says, “Not at all. The solutions we build are in no way lesser than what a ‘hardcore tech’ firm would create. What we do find is that technical staff find it interesting to think of the problem given to us more creatively than to simply follow a document that tells them what needs to be done. Our staff learn to think outside the box because of the sector we work in.” ■

WHERE  
ARE WE  
BEING  
READ?

## Civil Society is going places...

*Kutch, Porbandar, Chamoli, Bhavnagar, Ahwa, Tiswadi, Amritsar, Sabarkantha, Valsad, Sirsa, Hamirpur, Aizwal, Kinnaur, Dhanbad, Dumka, Palamu, Chamarajanagar, Haveri, Madikeri, Malappuram, Jhabua, Amravati, Kolhapur, Osmanabad, Bishnupur, Dimapur, Rajsamand, Mokochung, Mayurbhanj, Bathinda, Fatehgarh Sahib, Hoshiarpur, Jhalawar, Auraiya, Farrukhabad, Lakhimpur Kheri, Pratapgarh, Burdwan, Murshidabad, Pauri Garhwal, Cuddalore, Sivaganga, Kancheepuram, Varanasi, Bellare, Erode, Ramanathapuram, Kanyakummari, Perambalur, Pudukkotai, Shahdol, Tiruvannamalai .....*

**Civil Society**

READ US. WE READ YOU.



# The carbon meter

**Shweta Vitta**  
Bengaluru

**C**OMPANIES serious about reducing their carbon footprint need to think a lot more like individuals so that they map not only the big but also the small resources that workplaces consume, says Vivek Gilani, Ashoka Fellow and founder of no2CO2 and cBalance.

Through the three stages of 'Realise, Minimise and Neutralise', no2CO2 and cBalance create a range of tools which empower individuals and companies to assess their carbon footprint and alter it through a range of informed choices.

A freely available online C-Footprint Calculator is offered by no2CO2 to individuals to calculate their carbon footprint across various parameters such as electricity, air travel, food and water consumption, in-city travel, etc. For instance, if an individual records use of a one-tonne split-AC for three months a year for four hours every day at 20°C, and this costs him approximately ₹4,001, the calculator will then suggest use of the same AC for three hours every day at 24°C along with the fan and this will cost the individual around ₹1,816 less.



Vivek Gilani

There is also an online directory of resource providers with whose advice you can minimise your carbon footprint. Some examples are: car-pooling services or organisations which sell bio-degradable materials, etc.

Vivek Gilani recalls, "In a campaign in IT giant SAP's main data centre in Germany, they increased the temperature in their centre from 14°C to 15°C, reducing their annual consumption by 219,000 KWH. This energy is sufficient to light up over 1,000 homes in India for a month." Small changes such as these, which the human body will not even realise, can make a huge impact.

What does cBalance do?

cBalance, on the other hand, is a for-profit that works with companies to develop a sustainable strategy roadmap by enabling them to think like individuals. Internal interventions in the roadmap are targeted at achieving measurable mitigation.

For instance, in 2014, cBalance conducted a product Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) for Gits Food, a 50-year-old packaged food company, across all stages — from sourcing of raw materials to disposal of packaging by consumers. Through an in-depth analysis of Gits' operations, cBalance recognised carbon 'hotspots', or in other words, the most relevant inputs influencing resource and energy use in the lifecycle of a product, so that they could identify key areas to focus on to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For instance, one such hotspot was due to emissions arising from procurement of raw materials, contributing on average 63 per cent of the overall product lifecycle emissions.

The outcome of the assessment was approximately a reduction of 2,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, made possible by switching to renewable energy and imple-



## SAVE EARTH

**Switch to bucket bath:**

You can save 30 litres per shower if you use a bucket for bathing. Calculate that for a building of 30 flats and it works out to 13 lakh litres on an annual basis which is equivalent to planting 10 trees.

**Set AC from 24°C to 26°C along with fan:**

This would help save 12 per cent on AC power and approximately ₹2,500 for an AC that has been used for eight hours per day for six months. If this norm is followed by 30 houses, it would be equivalent to planting 45 trees!

**Walk:**

If a family of four decides to walk 1.5 km instead of taking their car twice a week, it would be equivalent to planting four trees per family per year.

**Reduce meat consumption:**

Avoiding three meat-based meals per week is equivalent to planting one tree per year.

menting sustainable practices in the supply chain, especially across energy-intensive areas such as milk and rice production.

## WAY FORWARD

Now, Gilani and his team are working towards improvising their tools so that companies can do the entire mapping themselves and come to the team only if they need expert advice. They are also spreading more awareness on the issue and informing people how they can take charge through a range of campaigns in companies, schools, etc. On the other hand, they are also working towards making eco-labelling much more popular and sustainable.

Gilani says, "There are innumerable organisations which are doing eco-friendly work, yet their environment footprint remains questionable. We are encouraging them to disclose their data on public platforms for people to see and we are also issuing them certification."

Talking about the power of individual responsibility, Gilani says, "As a country, we should be avoiding at least 64 million tonnes of carbon every year. What we have understood about the Indian per capita carbon footprint is that it isn't the result of one's passport — it doesn't matter which country an individual is from but the kind of lifestyle he or she leads. Hence, the only thing that will make a tangible difference is for more and more individuals to measure their footprint (without taking national realities into the picture), and then alter their lifestyle with simple changes."

According to the former Planning Commission's "Final Report of the Expert Group on Low Carbon Strategies for Inclusive Growth 2014", India, the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases, needs to reduce its carbon emissions by as much as 42 per cent by 2030 as compared to its 2007 levels. This would cost the country approximately \$834 billion. Yet, if we were to take into account carbon emissions on a per capita basis, India produces just about 1.9 tonnes per person as compared to 16.4 for the United States and 7.2 for China — two of the world's largest emitters.

"India is hiding behind the poor. The current carbon footprint is of the small wealthy class of Indians which constitutes just one per cent of the population and is camouflaged by the 823 million who are poor and nearly have a zero carbon footprint. Basically, poverty levels and low carbon-footprints are well aligned," says Gilani.

However, India is developing at a rapid pace and its GDP will only grow; hence, the country's carbon footprint is a matter of concern.

"In a country where there are no legal ramifications of complying with low carbon footprint regulations and there are no regulations to begin with, there is little incentive for companies or individuals to alter their lifestyles. This makes the whole issue humanitarian and not environmental," says Gilani.

He believes that responsibility lies with individuals, schools, colleges, private and public corporations and the government. ■

To know more, visit [www.india.ashoka.org](http://www.india.ashoka.org).



# INSIGHTS

OPINION | ANALYSIS | RESEARCH | IDEAS

## Govt needs better talent



RAJIV KUMAR

### INDIA FIRST

A senior French journalist, who has spent nearly seven years in India, called me recently for my views on the first year of the Narendra Modi government.

Unlike most others attempting an evaluation of the government's year in office, he was already aware that the economy was in better shape with inflation down, the growth rate up, foreign reserves rising, current account and fiscal deficits in control and some major reforms having been undertaken. These, inter alia, included the transparent auction of coal mines and the telecom spectrum; the successful launch of schemes for financial inclusion; the much-needed de-freezing of defence orders and contracts; raising the cap for FDI in insurance and defence; and the passage of the historic GST Bill in the Lok Sabha. Ignoring these achievements, he pointedly asked which segments of the population were happier or more supportive of Modi today than a year ago. To my utter surprise, I found myself honestly stumped at this apparently innocuous query.

Minorities are quite clearly unhappy because of the goings-on of the crazy communalist fringe. Farmers have not rallied in Modi's support, although proposed amendments to the Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Bill do not harm their interests and instead will facilitate their much needed move out of agriculture. Workers in the formal sector and their trade union leaders, including those from the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, are apprehensive that the government is likely to follow the Rajasthan initiative in diluting the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act.

Large industrialists and domestic investors

are not investing in new capacities, which is reflected in the growth rate of commercial bank credit to non-food sectors plummeting. FDI has not really picked up in any significant manner and portfolio investors (FII) have voted with their feet against the government, bringing the Sensex down sharply. The real estate sector is in the doldrums and the middle-class is not rushing to buy new homes or assorted consumer durables.

Therefore, at the end of one year, despite ostensibly very hard work and a significant number of reform measures, largely incremental, though, in nature, Modi finds himself facing disquiet and impatience from the middle, neo-middle and business classes who were his star supporters during the campaign. During my recent visits abroad, I also ran into negative mutterings within the diaspora who were clearly not willing to shower accolades upon their icon.

But one large section of the population must surely be happier and now more supportive of Modi. This is the informal sector where Bharat lives. Modi, quite consciously of course, and working to a plan, has focused his major reform initiatives and energies on multiple schemes to benefit this important bottom of the pyramid segment, in which he has to consolidate his support. The Jan Dhan Yojana, the three social sector insurance schemes with their minimal premiums and reasonable pay-outs, will surely help him to easily stave off the charge of being a "suit-boot ki sarkar". As long as these schemes are implemented universally and

without discrimination, which I am reasonably sure they will be, it will bring over to the Modi camp a significant section of voters who at present support political leaders with either regional or identity based appeal. To have focused his reform energies initially on the marginalised segments of the population may be a masterstroke as it will widen his political support and ensure electoral success in the coming critically important polls in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Much-needed reforms will be taken up subsequently once political support is ensured. This is not a strategy to be scoffed at.

Modi's middle-class support base has taken a rather severe mauling since AAP's most surprising victory in Delhi in January. To them Modi, the Prime Minister, appears inaccessible and insensitive to their need for better public services like education, health, electricity supply, law and order and, above all, employment. The investor and business community is also increasingly sceptical, especially in light of the hostile stance taken by the tax authorities and virtually zero change in ground realities so far. Modi should not wait too long to reverse negative perceptions in these segments as well.

An effective beginning can be made by making it mandatory for all secretaries heading major ministries and departments to include a list of negative perceptions about their department's performance along with their achievements over the past year. This would provide much-needed feedback to the PMO. Any administrative system without a feedback loop is often headed towards undesirable instability and possible implosion. This must be avoided.

Modi needs to marshal a much larger resource base of expertise and skills. There is now sufficient empirical evidence of a marked decline in the quality of human resources even in the covenanted services. The closed shop created by the IAS in filling not only all senior government positions but also all quasi-independent bodies must be forced open and people with domain expertise inducted. Apart from rejuvenating the talent pool, this would also help to overcome the present divide between

*Continued on page 26*





# India's fly ash deluge



KANCHI KOHLI

**I**N the past few years, an issue which has generated interest in the social, ecological, economic and political map of India is coal. De-allocation of coal blocks by the apex court and the new auctioning process; local protests around coal mines or thermal power plants (TPPs) and debates around larger national interest have all been facets of this discussion. Even as new dimensions and old facts are revealed each day, there are many coal-based power plants which continue to operate.

The very existence and operation of TPPs, either through domestic or imported coal, has meant that the combustion of coal will result in the production of fly ash. There are many technical explanations and scientific reasoning behind the quantum of fly ash produced through the use of different grades of coal. There are also legal and regulatory processes, which direct how this by-product should be collected, disposed or used. And then, there is visible reality. You just have to walk around or drive past any TPP in the country and see fly ash indiscriminately strewn around the plant or dumped in villages nearby.

The reason for this might be simple. There is more fly ash that is produced than can be consumed or the project authority does not want to adhere to utilisation norms. This is an issue which has been clearly recognised by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC). At a meeting held on 7 January, the MoEFCC, following directives of the National Green Tribunal, discussed the issue of fly ash utilisation with a range of 'stakeholders'.

The minutes of this meeting, convened by Shashi Shekhar, Special Secretary, were available on the website of the ministry in early May. The minutes record: "... fly ash generation is reported to be 172.87 million tons during 2013-14 and it is likely to increase up to 260 million tons by 2020. Unless immediate strict measures are taken to utilise fly ash appropriately, it will become a big problem in the near future."

The discussion further emphasised that since

1999 there exists a notification which mandates the use of fly or fly ash-based products in construction projects, construction of embankments of roads or flyovers, reclamation of low-lying areas, back filling or stowing of mines, and so on. As per this notification, all construction projects in the vicinity of 100 km of a TPP have to use fly ash-based material. Every environment clearance of a TPP is granted on condition that the utilisation of fly ash should be as per the 1999 notification. In the very next breath, it is stated that the requirements of this notification are not being complied with.

Before understanding what kind of recommendations this meeting concluded with it would be important to emphasise the limitations of a notification which only talks about fly ash utilisation. Important as it would be, the issue of fly ash needs to be dealt with at three levels. First, it would be critical

**You just have to walk around or drive past any TPP in the country and see fly ash indiscriminately strewn around the plant or dumped in villages.**

to examine if the quantum of fly ash disclosed by power companies while seeking environmental clearance is under-quoted. Second, can there be an assessment of how much fly ash can actually be absorbed in sectors, which were identified in 1999 and later in the review. Third, ascertain compliance with the condition related to fly ash generation and disposal by power companies; and lay down mechanisms to check this non-compliance.

The meeting of 7 January records that construction agencies, including the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), are not utilising fly ash even though they have been directed to do so. It also records discussions between agencies such as the Public Works Department, NHAI, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), and the Cement Manufacturers Association (CMA) to ascertain the reasons why fly ash generated is difficult to utilise. In fact, it was stated that since road construction is

a one-time activity, the use of fly ash is limited.

At the same time, it was pointed out that one of the big users has been the cement industry. In 2013, say the minutes of the meeting, about 41 per cent of total fly ash generated was used by the cement industry. However, this utilisation was significantly influenced by the quality of limestone, which absorbs fly ash to make cement. While the current standards of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) allow the use of upto 35 per cent of fly ash in cement manufacture, the meeting recommended this be increased to 45 per cent.

Other recommendations emerging from the meeting point to making it mandatory for construction projects within the vicinity of 500 km of a thermal power plant to use fly ash-based material like brick, tiles, blocks and the like. The distance was determined for all road construction projects — 500 km. In the 1999 notification, it was 100 km. The cost of transportation of the fly ash within 100 km is to be borne by the power plant operator.

With increased generation of fly ash, there have also been pilot experiments to use it as a product for back filling of mines — one example being the Talcher power plant in Odisha. The meeting recorded that filling of "void" areas of mines should be allowed only for those mines which have received closure certificates from the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute (CMPDI). Therefore, it might be important to also understand how many such areas can actually accommodate fly ash.

But one aspect came across as a given in this meeting. That fly ash will be generated and is only likely to increase was not to be questioned, leave alone finding measures to control it. Further, even though the meeting drew from a limited direction of the NGT to discuss the utilisation aspect of fly ash, there was no recorded mention of what could be the social, ecological and health impacts of the non-utilisation of fly ash. Groundwater contamination, dust pollution and its impacts on crop, livestock and human health have been issues pointed out in scientific and technical reports in India and abroad.

As long as coal is mined and utilised in power plants, fly ash will be a part of our socio-ecological system. Accommodating the quantum of ash is a problem of both compliance and capacity, but that alone is not going to address the larger issues of people, pollution and power. ■

*Kanchi Kohli is a researcher and writer. Email: kanchikohli@gmail.com*

*Continued from page 25*

the 'rulers and the ruled'. The Japanese practice of creating tripartite advisory committees for important ministries could be replicated with good effect. These would comprise bureaucrats, domain experts and representatives of private industry. Such a collaborative effort, which would truly represent 'Team India', is today needed for India to successfully compete in globalised markets.

A related issue is to overhaul the public education system at all levels. A country with a broken public education system, where even the poorest are forced to send their children to private cramming shops,

cannot achieve the desired balance between growth and equity. Along with financial inclusion, which he has focused on so far, Modi must focus now on 'education inclusion'. This requires a sharp course correction in the working of human resource development establishments both at the Central and state levels. Modi must know that there is sufficient evidence, expertise and experience available in the public domain which he can tap to bring about change in the education system.

India cannot hope to earn the demographic dividend without the necessary investment in human resources. It is well established that markets and the

private sector will not provide the required investment in this sector, which, like physical infrastructure, has strong 'public good' attributes. Therefore, the sooner Modi can bring his attention to this sector, the better. An improvement in the delivery of public education will directly respond to middle-class aspirations. This will ensure their continued support. Given the long lag in producing desired outcomes in this sector and the fickleness of the middle-class, Modi would do well to attend to this important task before all others. ■

*Rajiv Kumar is Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, and Founder-Director, Pahle India Foundation.*



# Evaluate systems, not schools



DILEEP RANJEKAR

## BACK TO SCHOOL

WHENEVER reporters from newspapers have sought my response on education budgets, I have had a stock reply:

“Budgets come and go every year — what really matters is how the budgets are meaningfully utilised and what they achieve.” Therefore, in April, when I was invited to deliberations on the effectiveness of government expenditures I was excited to be able to contribute. But, when I received the agenda, I became rather apprehensive. The discussion was to be about “how to link expenditure to outcomes”.

I realise that, in addition to allocating bigger budgets for education, it is important to begin truly monitoring how the money is utilised. It is, however, not as simple as it may seem and to reduce it to a cause-and-effect relationship is unwise. I’ve learnt this the hard way while being at the Azim Premji Foundation.

Having earlier spent 26 years in the corporate world before joining the social sector, performance orientation is in my blood. There were a few early policy decisions we made at Azim Premji Foundation in 2000. Blending the best of the corporate and social sector was one of them. And ensuring excellence in quality in whatever we do and performance orientation were two important and integral parts of our approach. Every programme we launched had a baseline, midline and an endline. In a way, many of our programmes were positioned as action research to develop a certain proof of concept. I must, however, say that we were rather dreamy-eyed about “outcomes” since we did not have a good understanding of the education sector.

I recall, in my ignorance, in the initial two years, asking a team from a reputed NGO in the education sector how they would measure the outcome of their work in the past 20 years. When the team did not respond I was disappointed. I thought this was a major problem in the social sector. Only after a few years did I realise how difficult it is to measure the results, how intricately several issues are interlinked and how a simple cause-and-effect relationship does not exist.

Some critical issues that we have understood over the past 15 years are:

- While the corporate sector has clear indicators such as profit after tax or return on investment or inventory turns and so on, the social sector has much less pronounced and much less measurable results.
- The cycles of measurement too are much shorter in the corporate sector. While the trend in companies is to measure performance every quarter (three months), social indicators can at best be measured

only after a few years.

- Within the various sub-sectors in development — there is a difference — indicators such as Infant Mortality Rate or Maternal Mortality Rate are relatively more concrete than correlating the teaching of the teacher with the learning outcome or measuring the impact of capacity building efforts in a particular geography.

We realised that impact in the social sector can be achieved only by working in a sustained and integrated manner and not just on a single aspect of the subject.

schools are single-teacher schools. A DIET has an approved staff strength of 23 but the average strength is eight across 670-odd districts. If we don’t fix these issues, how can we ever measure educational or learning outcomes?

We carried out competency-based learning assessment of close to 4.5 million students across five states of India for over three years. Knowing the status of learning levels for over four years, our teams were frustrated and argued, “Why are we meaninglessly assessing the learning levels when we fully know that the learning levels would not change



A midday meal in session

**Only after a few years in the social sector did I realise how difficult it is to measure results, how intricately several issues are interlinked and how a simple cause-and-effect relationship does not exist.**

I am amused when professionals from the corporate sector, from international organisations, from premier management schools and even some senior IAS officers speak of outcomes without adequate consideration for the prerequisites for achieving them.

There are so many aspects on the supply side that are not in place. It begins with very poor teacher preparation and goes on to low-quality enabling factors such as infrastructure, inadequate teacher-pupil ratio in the given school, and substandard in-service academic support for teachers and schools. Institutions such as the State Council for Education Research and Training (DSERT) and the District Institute of Education Training (DIET) do not have enough personnel and those that they have aren’t adequately trained. Institutions that are meant to play a support role at the block and cluster level just don’t have the capacity. Close to 20 per cent of

unless the system takes concrete steps to improve itself?”

And then there are the most difficult issues. A few of them are: (a) lack of political will at the national and state levels (b) uncertain and relatively short tenures of the leaders at IAS levels (c) serious and debilitating shortage of education professionals (d) lack of accountability and performance orientation across the bureaucracy (e) absence of a risk-reward system and (f) unwillingness to effect structural and policy reforms that are so necessary to achieving results.

Since the long-term vision is missing — the government system operates in a programmatic mode — programmes often change since people driving them change too. In addition, the bureaucracy often views programmes in terms of budget allocations — losing the original intent for which a pro-

*Continued on page 28*



# Self-help for the rural elderly



MATHEW CHERIAN

## GREY LINES

THERE are 1.7 million farmers in six districts of Vidharba — Akola, Amravati, Buldana, Yavatmal, Washim and Wardha — and since 2001, over 10,000 have committed suicide. Between 1 January and 30 September 2006, the worst period, over 970 farmers ended their lives. Worst of all, similar stories are being reported from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Rajasthan and the phenomenon seems to be spreading to even agriculturally-rich states like Punjab. Now farmer suicides have spread to Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. Recently Rahul Gandhi after a visit to Punjab had claimed in a press interview that no one in the present government is listening to the poor farmer or even paying a short visit to see their plight.

Several in-depth studies have been carried out on the subject by reputed institutions and many reasons have been cited for this malady. These include bad seeds, costly pesticides, drought, dumping of Bt cotton by the US, low import tariffs, failure of MCPS (Monopoly Cotton Procurement Scheme) and withdrawal of the State, declining public investment in agriculture, poor government agricultural extension services and the diminishing role of formal credit institutions. Blame is also being attributed to the government, whose policies encouraged cash crops like cotton, to developers of genetically modified (GM) crops, and dealers (who insist that farmers don't follow instructions for their seed).

The sad fact is that small and marginal farmers are under immense pressure. They are uncertain about crop yield, price, credit, income and the weather. Getting a good price for their crop is becoming increasingly difficult. Cotton's minimum support price averages ₹1,750 per quintal in Maharashtra. However, the cost of cultivating an acre, which yields six quintals on average, is around ₹10,000. Needless to say, small farmers are forced to lead a hand-to-mouth existence. Out of necessity, they are becoming dependant on the input dealer for advice (leading to supplier-induced demand)

*Continued from page 27*

gramme is designed.

So, if we have to measure results, first we must evaluate if the conditions exist to provide those results. Illustratively, if the midday meal programme has committed to provide 400 calories, 12 grams of protein and micronutrients, what needs to be measured is whether the system is designed to supply that consistently to every child. Are the budgets there? Is the distribution capability there? Until this is fixed, it would be meaningless to measure the nutritional impact on the health of children.

and on informal sources of credit with greater interest burden.

Studies in Vidharba show that over 80 per cent of farmers who had committed suicide had less than two hectares and 98 per cent had no irrigation facilities. Over 68 per cent are said to have been the silent, introvert type, and 80 per cent were between 30 and 50 years old. Around 85 per cent are said to have had no bad habits, yet 86 per cent were debt-ridden (31 per cent had even mortgaged their land). Most were cotton farmers (66 per cent), followed by those who farmed wheat (23 per cent). Almost all owed banks, micro-finance institutions (MFIs) or moneylenders, between ₹20,000 and ₹80,000, and were paying interest in excess of 20 per cent per annum to MFIs or over 40 per cent to local moneylenders.

The Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), led by the charismatic activist Kishore Tiwari, has been campaigning for the government to look at agricultural distress and agrarian suicides more intensely as it is a cancer which is growing. What is left behind are farm widows and the grandparents who bear the brunt of the future, referred to as "Black Diwali". Strikes, protests and fasts have been going on. Nobody is listening. We have become immune to these deaths. The human stories related are very pathetic.

To cope with this tragedy in Yavatmal, a district in Vidharbha, HelpAge India has been forming Elder Self-Help Groups (ESHGs) since 2009, which encourage savings and provide low-interest loans without collateral. This has helped many farm widows find their feet and look after their families. We are trying to find a localised solution to reduce agricultural distress as grandparents now look after their grandchildren in many cases.

One such story is of Bharati Pradip Pawar whose husband had eight acres of rainfed land. Due to crop failure her husband committed suicide on 21 November 2008 by consuming pesticide. The entire responsibility of looking after the family fell on Bharati's shoulders. Though she had no experience of agricultural activities, she has managed very well. With the help of a local person she received a sewing machine. She started tailoring work and small income generating activities.

Later, she started a flour mill with some assistance from HelpAge India. It helped increase her income. She received 50 per cent subsidy from the government to establish a group flour mill. She is also part of the ESHG. Bharati is very active in

Or, to take another example, it would be meaningless to measure the success of 1.3 million anganwadis if we don't have the trained staff for them, don't have a good quality curriculum of what would happen with the children and if nutritious food cannot be regularly provided to the children.

Apart from issues at systemic and supply level, there are more basic issues at the ground level. It is necessary to have a deeper understanding of the way parents view their children's education, the dynamics of teaching and learning in the classroom, the process of continuous assessment of children and effective use

community work and supports other people in their difficulties. She received an award from HelpAge India on International Women's Day.

Another widow, Kamalbhai Sitaram, whose husband committed suicide, is 60 years old and from a village named Pardhi. She started a *paan* shop with a loan from HelpAge India. She is an ESHG member since the last two years. She has attended various meetings which gave her insights on saving for a secure future and ideas to start a business. At the village level she helped start a *dal* mill and gave seeds to the beneficiaries. She helped the village to get electricity. Besides, Kamalbhai donates ₹50 to people who are in need of money. The advantages of becoming an ESHG member are ease in getting a loan and enhanced solidarity among the villagers. Kamalbhai feels that women, too, should be provided tractors to carry out farming activities. Increased formation of ESHGs will help the entire village. Elderly people can then live in a better atmosphere. How long can the elderly survive in an adverse situation of failing agriculture?

A system for setting up a jointly owned and administered People's Social Safety Fund needs to be considered on an urgent basis. This could be a Contributory Fund with equal contribution from farmers and the government. The government's component for the fund can be raised by levying a cess/tax on intermediate or finished cotton products. This could be worked out by a Special Committee under the Ministry of Finance. The amount could be used for the welfare of the truly distressed. This will avert suicidal situations since, as in ESHGs, it would be possible to take loans for marriages etc. The farmers contribution could be as low as ₹10 or ₹50 per family. The system could be federated at tehsil or district level with each SHG comprising of 15-20 farmers. Such local funds can create a safety net. Multiple measures need the urgent attention of the government if farmers have to survive and prosper in this globalised world.

When former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Vidharbha he waived farm loans with much publicity. This gesture only helped cooperative banks and other banking institutions clear their non-performing assets. Little did it help the widows or the credit system in Vidarbha. The National Rural Livelihoods Mission should consider moving into Vidharbha as a priority. Agriculture is in a grave situation. Is anybody listening? ■

*Mathew Cherian is CEO of HelpAge India.*

of such assessment for a teacher's professional development, the perspective teachers have of education, the socio-economic and cultural issues that govern the approach of communities to school, the competence and value system of school leaders and so on.

It is important that politicians, administrators, academicians and those who are willing to contribute to the education system (including the corporate social responsibility partners) appreciate these issues before jumping to conclusions on measurement of outcome. ■

*Dileep Ranjekar is CEO of the Azim Premji Foundation.*



## A child's vision

Nagesh Kukunoor's charming new film



Two orphaned siblings travel across the desert in *Dhanak*

**Saibal Chatterjee**  
New Delhi

**M**AKING a children's film in India is no child's play. But then, Nagesh Kukunoor has rarely sought easy ways out. In the 48-year-old director's latest film, *Dhanak* (Rainbow), set in mirage-inducing Rajasthan, we see the world through the gaze of children and discover beauty and magic in the unlikeliest of ways.

"It is a difficult challenge making a children's film," says Kukunoor. "But you never say never in this business."

Kukunoor shot *Dhanak* over 33 days in the searing May-June heat last year, working with two child actors — Hetal Gada and Krrish Chhabria. The former is a TV actress, while the latter has figured in commercials. "I had to un-train them in order to rid them of their television and modelling industry habits," says the director.

*Dhanak* revolves around two orphaned siblings, a spirited 10-year-old girl and her visually impaired younger brother, who live in a fictional village. The duo travels across the desert to meet a Bollywood

superstar who, they believe, has the power to restore the latter's eyesight.

Coming on the heels of *Lakshmi*, the dark and disturbing human trafficking drama that Kukunoor made last year, *Dhanak* is an assertion that "some humanity is left in this world" and that "there is still scope for magic".

"In the India that I grew up in, we trusted people. Now everything is very different. *Dhanak* is my search for what we have lost," says Kukunoor, who last worked with children in *Rockford* (1999), a coming-of-age drama set in a boarding school.

In one scene in *Dhanak*, the two young protagonists spot an unconscious foreigner lying under a tree. The girl is wary of the man. Her brother isn't. "Learn to trust people," the sightless boy exhorts her. That simple line uttered in innocence underlines the theme of the film.

*Dhanak* is Kukunoor's 14th film. It was a huge hit at the Berlin Film Festival earlier in the year. It bagged two prizes in the festival's Generation KPlus sidebar: the Grand Prix from the international jury and a Special Mention from the children's jury.

*Continued on page 30*



Nagesh Kukunoor

**'It is a difficult challenge making a children's film,' says Kukunoor. 'But you never say never in this business.'**



Continued from page 29

The film has since travelled to the TIFF Kids International Film Festival (Toronto) and been screened at the closing-night gala of the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA).

*Dhanak*, Kukunoor points out, completes his 'Rajasthan trilogy' that began with *Dor* (2006). It includes the unreleased *Yeh Hausla*.

The Hyderabad director's fondness for Rajasthan is of course owing to the visual richness of the place. "There are very few places left in India that can contribute to the look of a film the way Rajasthan does," says Kukunoor.

Kukunoor's filmmaking career has never settled



Still from the film: Kukunoor captures the visual richness of Rajasthan

into a predictable pattern. As a storyteller, he has never repeated himself even at the risk of courting disaster. He has seen many setbacks, but nothing has deflected him from his chosen path.

He has worked with Bollywood actors like Akshay Kumar (*8X10 Tasveer*) and John Abraham (*Aashayein*), but he has remained an outsider to the Mumbai dream factory.

In a chequered career spanning 17 years, the former chemical engineer and environmental consultant has worked on the fringes of the mainstream industry and on his own terms, experimenting with a wide range of genres and themes and fiercely guarding his creative independence.

Expectedly, not all of Kukunoor's films have been as commercially successful as his 1998 debut, *Hyderabad Blues* and the National Award-winning *Iqbal* (2005), but he has carried on regardless.

*Dhanak*, a feel-good road trip fable, has the makings of a box office hit. It sways adroitly between the disarmingly simple and the cheerfully life-affirming. It appeals directly to the heart, but it also casts a lasting spell on the mind.

Written by Kukunoor himself, *Dhanak* is the story of village girl Pari (Hetal Gada), who assures her brother, Chotu (Krrish Chhabria), that he will see the world with his own eyes before he turns nine.

Pari's resolve is strengthened when she comes across an eye donation poster with Shahrukh Khan's face on it. She writes a letter to the movie star.

She then learns that he is shooting in Jaisalmer, over 300 kilometres away. So days before Chotu's birthday on 2 October, the orphaned siblings flee the desert home of their sympathetic hookah-smoking uncle (Vipin Sharma) and domineering

and overbearing aunt (Gulfam Khan).

The journey across the sand dunes is fraught with danger. "The placement of two children in a desert heightens the sense of isolation. You see nothing in the frame apart from sand and sky," says Kukunoor.

The landscape evokes an overwhelming feeling of remoteness. Says the writer-director: "The road stretches endlessly, human habitation is negligible, and nature is at its most starkly dramatic here."

The myth and magic that *Dhanak* weaves go well with the setting. "It may sound a tad clichéd, but it is a fact that children believe in magic. Even ordinary events can fill them with wonder," says Kukunoor.

*Dhanak* paints a portrait of hope in which the

magic of popular cinema and the power of a child's unbridled imagination merge in a marvellously infectious manner. Pari and Chotu are engaged in constant banter over who is better, Shahrukh or Salman.

Kukunoor conjures up a dreamscape informed with childlike awe, but his story remains firmly rooted in the real world in which Pari and Chotu are up against constant threats to their well-being.

On the way to Jaisalmer, the children encounter all kinds of strangers, from jolly do-

gooders to slippery traffickers as they ride their luck all the way to their desired destination. The characters they meet are as quirky as they come.

A holy woman (Vibha Chibber) claims that she is friends with SRK, a co-actor in her Delhi theatre days. A beautiful and spunky nomadic woman (Flora Saini) commits highway robberies without batting an eyelid and, in the bargain, rescues Pari and Chotu from the clutches of a potential kidnapper.

An ageing soothsayer (Bharti Achrekar), with the help of her "whispering stones", shows the duo the path forward.

They also come across "a squat and strange man" (Suresh Menon) who drives an imaginary truck and gives their quest one final thrust.

Apart from being a children's story, *Dhanak* is an exploration of the reach and influence of popular culture. "The information boom and the communications revolution may have changed our world beyond recognition, but the sway that the heroes of commercial Hindi cinema hold on the minds of the people has only become stronger," says Kukunoor.

Even in the remotest villages, Bollywood heroes are seen as the answer to all our problems. In *Dhanak*, just about every character that the protagonists meet has a Bollywood-related anecdote to relate.

There is no way of telling whether these tall claims are tall claims or genuine experiences, but for the siblings they are confirmation of their faith in silver screen heroes.

Says Kukunoor: "In our country, only about 10 people (Bollywood stars and cricket icons) sell everything from charity to cement, chocolates to insurance plans. It is amazing that the public never tires of these faces." ■

# 'In India's

Civil Society News

New Delhi

IN 1947 when India gained independence, sceptics said the new nation would fall apart, that India was really just an idea. A country with so much diversity would never hold together. Besides, there were regions that didn't want to be part of the Indian Union and were already picking up the gun.

Yet, 67 years later, the Indian Union has evolved and achieved national unity. Meanwhile, several other countries in the world with less diverse populations and militant groups have fallen apart. How has India kept its wayward flock together?

Jhumpa Mukherjee, Assistant Professor of Political Science at St Xavier's College, Kolkata, in her book, *Conflict Resolution in Multicultural Societies: The Indian Experience*, explains the strategies used by the Indian State to accommodate regional and ethnic aspirations.

The architects of the Indian Constitution, sensitive to sceptics, created a document whose credo was unity in diversity. The State's main strategy, she writes, was multicultural decentralisation. The government tried to be inclusive and accommodating to regional and ethnic aspirations.

The demand for separate states has been mostly conceded. Within states, movements for autonomy were accommodated by the creation of institutions such as autonomous councils and district councils. Minorities, in those regions, were also given representation. In a nutshell, the Indian State created a sense of belonging by devolving power and autonomy through a series of institutions to dissenting groups.

India's complex mosaic of strategies is well explained by Mukherjee. By examining the bigger picture — India's success — Mukherjee also provides a sort of roadmap for other countries trying to deal with ethnic tension.

**Why a book on India's success in conflict resolution when conflicts — the Naxal movement, Gorkhaland, movements in the Northeast — are still going on?**

Most countries of the world, being multicultural, face the challenge of accommodating cultural identities. We know, post the 1990s, with the collapse of a number of multicultural countries, the question of resolving ethnic conflicts has assumed added significance.

Interestingly, despite all odds, India has survived as a single integrated State where the oft-quoted phrase, 'unity in diversity' has been replaced by 'unity through diversity'. India's multi-ethnic reality is an enigma to the world. How has a complex multi-ethnic country with layers of regional, class, caste, linguistic, religious and tribal affiliations survived as a single unit despite phases of movements for autonomy often virulent in character?

My book explores the multi-tiered conflict resolution measures adopted by the Indian State to address ethnic conflicts that have prevented the disintegration of the country despite periodic spells of autonomy movements.

This does not mean that the Indian State has been able to address all multicultural demands. But what



# diversity is its unity'

PRASANTA BISWAS



Jhumpa Mukherjee: 'Secessionist movements have faded away'

**'What is interesting are the multicultural strategies adopted by the State to accommodate identities. A one size fits all solution would have been disastrous for the unity and integrity of the country.'**

is interesting are the multicultural strategies adopted by the State to accommodate identities. I believe that a one size fits all solution would have been disastrous for the unity and integrity of the country. Rather, due to multiple mechanisms of conflict resolution in-built into the Constitution, thanks to the farsightedness of its architects, and efforts by subsequent governments, India's identities mostly have been internally and democratically accommodated and not managed forcibly.

The different movements, say, for Gorkhaland or Bodoland, should not really be seen as disruptive in character. If you look at India's bewildering diversity, multilayered population, widespread disparities and uneven development, such aspirations and demands should be seen as a natural fallout of democracy.

India's vibrant democracy offers space for different identities to voice their aspirations rather than stifle them. Yes, there are identity-based movements. But the State has been dynamic enough to accommodate them as in the recent formation of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA).

If a State respects its diversities it has to provide room for negotiations to promote their distinctive identities. This should be a continuous process since

movements change with time. It is undeniable that India, despite multiple conflicts and movements, has not disintegrated and such movements have never undermined the resilience of the State.

**Do you believe that the desire for independence from India has faded over the years?**

Yes, secessionist movements have faded away because of three reasons. First, political-institutional measures guaranteed to ethnic groups have given them political and cultural autonomy. I am not saying all group demands have been accepted. But they are stakeholders in the political and economic system as much as the majority communities.

Secondly, numerous experiments of autonomous arrangements and continuous talks have given dissenting groups a democratic space to mobilise themselves. A large number of peace accords have been signed with different groups of the Northeast leading to accommodation of most, if not all, ethnic aspirations.

Thirdly, for independence, financial viability is of utmost importance. Resources, revenue and administrative expertise are needed to sustain an autonomous unit outside the Indian Union. The ethnic groups are not adequately equipped to handle larger issues of governance, more so, the elites within



**CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION IN  
MULTICULTURAL  
SOCIETIES  
THE INDIAN  
EXPERIENCE**

Jhumpa Mukherjee  
₹ 795  
Sage

the ethnic groups who are the decision-makers. They can extract concessions from the Union Government, given the popularity of regional parties in the coalition and in the federal scheme of things. It is easier to carry out movements by being within the system rather than outside it. Moreover, by staying within the Indian Union, they enjoy security from external forces.

**What would you say were the three best strategies used by the Union government in the initial years to implement multicultural decentralisation?**

The three I would choose are:

- The reorganisation of Indian states on the basis of language.
- The right to recognition through different degrees of accommodation — political as well as cultural.
- Besides, the government ensured that all autonomous decentralised arrangements were based on the principle of democracy and not something as 'naturally given'. That is to say, all institutions draw their legitimacy from the consent of the electorate.

**You say the Government of India's initial challenge, linguistic reorganisation of states, has been a success story. Yet there are continuous demands for smaller states. Is this due more to a desire for economic growth and better governance rather than identity?**

Initially, the demand for state autonomy was solely based on cultural factors. But over the last two decades, cultural and ethnic factors have been reshaped by developmental concerns as in the case of Uttarakhand and Telangana.

If we examine other demands for separate states, as in Vidarbha, Vindhyaachal, Harit Pradesh, they are all based on questions of regional developmental aspirations. Development, a share in resources, economic security, education and employment opportunities have subsumed, to some extent, affiliations on the ground of religion, language and ethnic divisions.

**Smaller units like the Autonomous Development Councils (ADCs) appear not to have performed economically, for example, for the Gorkhas. What holds them back?**

The autonomous councils lack necessary funds and are dependent on their state governments for revenue generation. This thwarts their progress and development. There is a large gap between the approved budget and the flow of funds from the state government.

Although the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution provides a substantial list of developmental functions to the ADCs, they do not have matching grants to carry out such functions. Moreover, the taxes levied by the ADCs are meagre. The Central government has directed the states to distribute a portion of tribal developmental funds directly to the ADCs for developmental and administrative purposes. But, in the absence of clear guidelines, the state governments are reluctant to provide the funds and even when they do disburse funds, it is often too late. ■

Email: jhumpasxc@yahoo.com



SUSHEELA NAIR



A Spanish lady in her traditional attire

# A SLICE OF LIFE IN RURAL SPAIN

**Susheela Nair**  
Valencia

**F**LOATING in a traditional boat down the placid waters of the Albufera Lake is an incredible experience. It evoked memories of a cruise back home in the backwaters of Kerala. As the boat drifted down the great, shallow expanse of the lagoon of La Albufera, the scenic charm of the magical green landscape unfolded before us.

Located around 12 km from the city of Valencia in Spain, the Albufera Natural Park is one of the most important wetlands in the Iberian Peninsula. It is the biggest natural reserve in Europe and the Albufera Lake is the largest in Spain.

Eulogised by ancient Valencian poets as “the mirror of the sun, the stars and the moon” because of the beautiful reflection of these celestial bodies in its placid waters, Albufera is an ideal place for a romantic getaway, a family excursion or a culinary tour to the restaurants in the local village of El Palmar.

Time seemed to stand still as we drifted along in the watery realm of the lake, strewn with reed beds. We passed green rice fields, farmhouses, *barracas*



A waterfront church in Albufera

(traditional houses) and tiny waterfront churches.

We caught a fleeting glimpse of bird species such as the cinnamon teal, the Northern Shoveller and the Grey Heron. We also spied fish species such as the Valencia hispanica, the eel and the Mugilla.

These wetlands are home to innumerable native and migrant water birds. The balance between agriculture and the delicate ecosystem of the Albufera natural reserve has to be carefully managed.

This ancient marine gulf that evolved into a fresh-water lake finds mention in the Ramsar Convention’s list of Wetlands of International Importance. It has also been declared a Special Bird Protection Area or (Zonas de Especial Protección de Aves (ZEPA)). The area covered by this declaration is the Albufera Lake, its wetland environment, and the coastal band or cordon (Dehesa del Saler) adjoining them.

The formation of the lake occurred due to the collapse of around 30 km of the coastal band between Valencia and Cullera. Albufera Lake has an irregular outline, with an approximate diameter of

six km at its widest part. It is connected to the sea by canals or waterways that can be opened or closed by floodgates to modify the volume of water in the lake. There are six small islands in it.

Huan Gorets, a rice farmer here, explains that growing rice is the prime occupation of the people. There is pressure to expand the area under rice farming to increase revenue. But this would adversely affect the survival of Albufera Lake.

“The Arabs started growing rice near the Albufera Natural Reserve in the eighth century. Today, rice is grown on around 16,000 hectares. Three varieties are grown: Bomba, Senia and Bahia,” says Gorets.

With rice being grown all around, local residents invented a stew made of rice and local products —

SUSHEELA NAIR



## Paella recipe

### Ingredients

- Valencian rice: 400 gm ●
- Chicken: 800 gm ● Rabbit: 400 gm ● Snails: 12 (optional)
- Broad beans: 400 gm ●
- Tender beans: 150 gm ● Green beans: 250 gm ● Olive oil: 1 cup
- Garlic: 1 peeled and chopped
- Tomato: 1 medium ● Sweet paprika: 1 tsp ● Rosemary: 1 sprig ● Saffron threads ●
- Water: 6 cups ● Salt: to taste

### Method:

Heat olive oil in a wide, shallow, paella pan. Sauté the chicken and rabbit for about five minutes. Season with salt and fry slowly in the paella pan. Once the meat is sautéed, add the vegetables and stir-fry. Then add the garlic, paprika and tomato. Add the water and the snails. Simmer for 10 minutes. Then

add the saffron threads and the rice, spreading it across the whole surface of the pan. Cook on high heat for eight minutes. Reduce the heat to simmer for another eight minutes and wait until the base of the rice becomes crispy.



SUSHEELA NAIR



the famous paella (pronounced as 'paiyya'). The name of the dish comes from the container in which it is cooked. Although its popularity has led to varying versions, the original recipe is the one which contains Valencia rice, chicken, rabbit, green beans, broad beans, tomato, rice, olive oil, water, saffron, garlic and salt.

We had lunch at Gorets' farmhouse. We watched two burly cooks churn out the traditional dish, a sort of risotto with an array of meat, seafood and veggies that are mingled into a fluffy bed of saffron-spiced, slow-simmered rice.

Since it takes a few hours for all the flavours of the paella to mingle, the dish is mostly cooked in huge portions in large pans. The base of Spain's quintessential dish is always *sofrito* — tomato, garlic, and onion. Other than that, ingredients vary, because people personalise it.

Paella is traditionally cooked on a wood fire. You can eat it the traditional way too, directly from the pan itself with a wooden spoon, or use an individual plate. The delicious dish is best combined with Sangria, the famous Spanish cocktail made of wine and fruit.

Rice is grown elsewhere in Spain too. But the strain from Valencia is regarded as the finest and most special. It is protected by a Geographical Indication (Denomination of Origin) status.

The rice, sown between April and May, when the temperature is optimum for germination, is harvested between September and October. The average production of rice is 120 million kg. Paella makes up a big part of Spain's culinary pride and it was born deep in Valencia.

The price per person for the tour at the Albufera Natural Park with Rice Tartana is €50 (including boat trip, presentation by the company, explanation of rice cultivation, tour of the facilities and lunch). ■

Contact: Juan Valero, Mob. +34 606746761, juan@ricetartana.com

# A menu with millet

**Sumana Narayanan**  
Chennai

**P**REM's Graama Bhojanam is hard to spot. Located on a busy thoroughfare in Adyar, a sprawling neighbourhood in south Chennai, Prem's signboard jostles for attention with shops advertising gold jewelry. The restaurant's décor is minimalistic. Its bright orange walls have notice boards with information on the health benefits of millets and customer reviews pinned on them. Reminiscent of old office canteens, Prem's has about half-a-dozen tables with chairs scattered across three rooms.

But once you tuck into the food, the nuisance of the hunt for the restaurant in the summer heat and the lack of parking space all fade away. The food is worth it and the service is excellent. Prem's lives up to its reputation of providing tasty and healthy rustic food.

The restaurant uses a variety of millets — foxtail, finger, barnyard, pearl millet and sorghum — to make a variety of typical South Indian dishes. On the menu are dosas, pesarattus, idlis, and idi-ayappam (steamed rice noodles). Normally, these are made of white rice and lentils. At Prem's the white rice is completely replaced by millets. They also avoid using wheat to make rotis and rava (sooji) to make the rava dosa. Although the menu says 'rice' or 'rava dosa', these just indicate what to expect in terms of texture and appearance. The only rice one can find is black rice (kavuni) which was imported by the Chettiar community from Myanmar a long time ago. This rice is far more nutritious than the processed white rice that is usually eaten.

A hearty meal for two costs just ₹300.

Lunch is a thali with rasam, sambar, curd, rice made of barnyard millet, a choice of millet rotis or assorted kalis (a rice and dal dish but made of millets), all accompanied by vegetable side dishes. The rasam and sambar were spicy yet tempered with a generous dollop of ghee and one could hardly tell that the rice wasn't rice at all!

Dinner is what is locally called tiffin: dosas, idlis, pesarattu (an Andhra dish which is like a dosa but with more dal), and so on. The dosas and idlis are rather mild in taste, but each variety has a certain texture. The thatte idli made of kodo millet is out of this world. It is as soft and light as any regular idli. The akki (rice) roti, a Karnataka staple, and the tenai rava dosa (made of foxtail millet) were my

favourites with just the right dash of green chillies and onions to boost the flavour.

The dishes have the same taste and texture as the original rice versions and are made with far less oil. The only 'greasy' dosa was the Davangere benne dosa but that is to be expected since benne means butter. All the dishes are accompanied by a couple of chutneys (groundnut, coriander and the like), sambar and mixed vegetable kootu which is essentially a gravy side dish.

The restaurant is the brainchild of N.S. Krishnamoorthi, a former Hindustan Lever

PICTURES BY SUMANA NARAYANAN



The restaurant's decor is neat and simple



The millet thali

employee who worked on animal feeds. He grew up eating millets at home near Hosur, a semi-arid region near the Tamil Nadu-Karnataka border. "I thought we ate millets because we were not well off," he says.

Later, his work took him around the country and he discovered India's rich food culture. Being a food-

ie, Krishnamoorthi has, for years, been inventing dishes at home for his family and friends. Added to this personal R&D was his training in nutrition from his years at Hindustan Lever.

"There are restaurants serving every conceivable cuisine," says Krishnamoorthi. "I decided to combine traditional foods and health. Of course, the challenge was to offer something healthy and tasty." So what was the most difficult recipe to tweak? Krishnamoorthi smiles. "Definitely the idli. It was tough getting the softness right."

The menu in his restaurant continues to evolve since he is constantly experimenting. Recently, neer dosa was added. Some other dishes are yet to make it to the menu though the board outside the restaurant advertises them, such as jolada (or jowar) roti.

Eight months after the restaurant's launch, Krishnamoorthi and his team of 14 (including his wife and son) are slowly expanding into catering luncheon meetings and providing office lunches. ■

Prem's Graama Bhojanam is located at No. 19, Sardar Patel Road (Next to GRT Jewellers), Adyar, Chennai-20. Phone: 9840062772/9840313050.



## Bangle Box

BANGLES are an evergreen style statement. Skirt or sari, a pretty bangle enhances your sartorial appearance. Try an unusual bangle from Bangle Box – arty and trendy. Made from recycled paper and natural materials by women living in Kolkata’s slums, these bangles are eye-catching and sure to perk up your outfit.

Bangle Box is a programme by Responsible Charity, which provides jobs, work and dignity to women living in slums and villages in and around Kolkata.

Each bangle costs just ₹Rs 75 and the money earned goes directly to the women employed. The money also helps to fund the many programmes that Responsible Charity runs for children in need and their families: education, English classes, medical and nutritional assistance, micro loans, help in building homes, planned parenthood and implementing sustainable lighting.

Founded by Hemley Gonzalez in 2009, Responsible Charity describes itself as a humanist organisation that works directly with impoverished children and their families. You can also make a child smile by buying a new toy and a set of clothes and donating it to Responsible Charity.

Or you can improve the lives of informal women workers by buying a box of their pretty bangles. ■



### Contact:

Hemley Gonzalez, 2 Saktigarh Road, Jadavpur, Kolkata- 700032  
Phone: 033-4004-8442 info@responsiblecharity.org  
www.responsiblecharity.org www.facebook.com/responsiblecharity

## Solar Cap

LOOK cool this summer with a solar cap on your head. Invented by Vivek Bhatia, an entrepreneur based in Pune, the solar cap has a small, neat fan fitted on the front part of the cap. As you step into the sun, the fan begins to run, blowing breeze on to your head. The cap is fitted with tiny solar panels that generate a five- volt supply of power.



PICTURES BY AJIT KRISHNA

Since the fan is made of plastic, it is perfectly safe. All you have to do is step into the sun with the solar cap on your head. You can buy the cap in three colours: blue, red and black. The cap costs just ₹499 and can be posted to your address.

The solar cap has been invented by Fuel Saver, a company started by Bhatia and Chaitanya Thobre. The cap is selling well and is especially suitable for NGO field workers. It doesn’t require a battery to charge and works best in bright sunshine. It doesn’t grind to a halt on a cloudy day either since the solar panels remain charged.

The cap is made of cotton. It fits well on any head and looks trendy. ■

### To place an order, contact:

Fuel Saver India, 17, Medha, Sanewadi, SBI Lane, Aundh, Pune - 411007  
Phone: 020-25898516. Mobile: 09665642722  
Email: solarpower164@yahoo.in, info@cap-cap-cap.com







Now earn

**10.07%**  
p.a.\*

annualised yield on a 36 month and

**11.06%**  
p.a.\*

annualised yield on a 60 month

# DCB Fixed Deposit

**Double your deposit in 8 years 1 month!!#**

Conditions apply. These interest rates are w.e.f. 12<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and are subject to revision without prior notice. \*Pre-tax annualised simple yield calculated at quarterly compounding frequency for a 36 / 60 month term deposit at the rate of 8.90% p.a. when interest and principal are paid at maturity. #Pre-TDS at the rate of interest of 8.75% p.a. and cumulative option.

DCB Bank Limited (Formerly Development Credit Bank Limited)



DCB 24-Hour Customer Care

Email [customercare@dccb.com](mailto:customercare@dccb.com)

Call Toll Free 1800 209 5363

Website [www.dccb.com](http://www.dccb.com)

# DCB BANK





# equal opportunity. it is always at work at Tata Steel.



Tata Steel recognises and values the differences in employee backgrounds and skills. Our training takes care of this and brings them to the same level. Giving all equal opportunity to grow and contribute to the nation's well-being.

Our **Safety Excellence** practices improve occupational health and safety management all the time. This is possible because we adhere to stringent internationally recognised safety standards.

We also train and supervise employees on **safety procedures and healthcare.** Where we provide them information on safe handling of potential hazards and safety equipment. This turns them into better employees and ensures even better productivity.

Indeed, the values of equal opportunity is what works at Tata Steel.

**TATA STEEL**  
Values stronger than steel